

THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE

# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

*Edited by* PETER HUGH REED



MARCH

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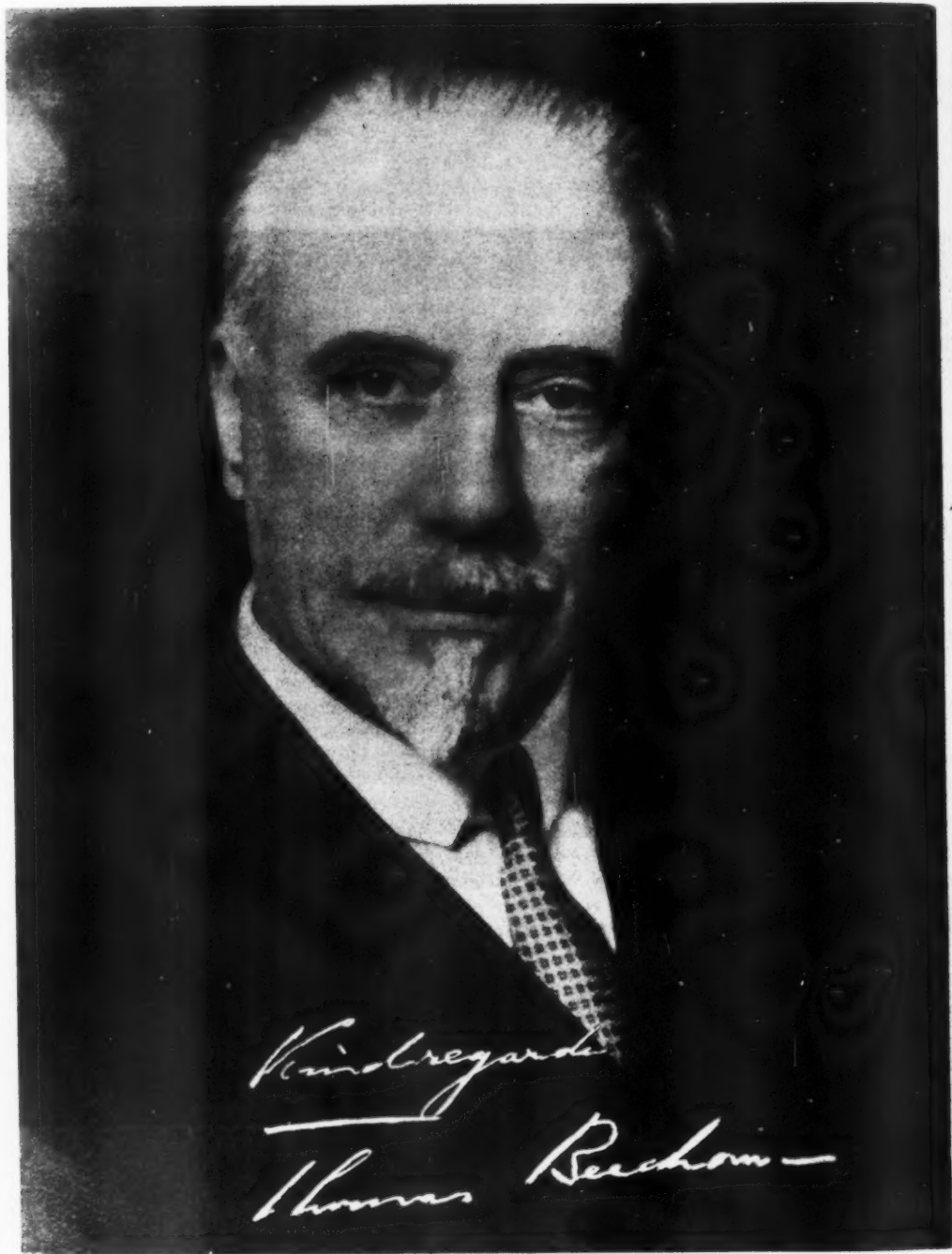
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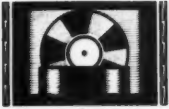




# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

Volume IV, No. 11

MARCH, 1939



*Page*

*By*

388	The Rising Star of Berlioz.....	Philip Barr
393	The Trapp Family, Some Notes and a Review	
395	Overtones	
396	The Library Shelf	
397	Emma Eames and her Records.....	Stephen Fassett
397	Record Notes and Reviews	
417	The Magic Flute Recording.....	George C. Leslie
418	Swing Music Notes.....	Enzo Archetti
420	In the Popular Vein.....	Horace Van Norman
422	Correspondence	

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Inserts: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present

No. 16—SIR THOMAS BEECHAM

No. 17—EMMA EAMES in The Marriage of Figaro

(These pictures are for framing at the wish of the reader. They should be cut apart with a knife.)

# THE RISING STAR OF BERLIOZ

**C**OMPOSERS WHO HAVE BEEN DEAD seventy years seldom continue to be a matter of dispute; Hector Berlioz is the exception. Posterity, considered so infallible, has not done her duty by him; we wrangle over him as though he were still alive. Until recently the Berlioz-fans have been greatly outnumbered, but now their strength is increasing. A facetious critic remarked the other day that he "understood there was a Berlioz-question". There always has been, but ten years ago he probably had not heard of it.

When we speak of the Romantic Movement of 1830, we generally think of France. Not that she began it; but she did make it peculiarly her own. The German Romantic Movement was quieter, more dreamy and introspective; the French was militant — people felt about all this new art as if it were something political. The year 1830 saw the production of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, when all the young and ardent spirits in Paris turned out to do him honor (Théophile Gautier with his red waistcoat, and so on); it also saw the July Revolution and abdication of Charles X, and many people felt that these events were part of the same process.

The Paris of 1830 saw something else, too: the first performance of the *Symphonie Fantastique*. This event was as much a sign of the times as the others — the character of the music, the character of the composer, a stormy, disputatious man with a flaming head of hair as red as Gautier's waistcoat — and should have made a great stir, but it didn't. For it was Berlioz's misfortune to be a solitary phenomenon — French Romanticism's sole representative in music. He would have found plenty of company in literature and art — Hugo, Balzac, Doré, Delacroix — but the musicians around him were untouched by Romanticism and merely thought him mad. So do many today, for he is utterly different from any composers they know, Romantic or otherwise. The German Romantics like Schubert and Schumann are tender and introspective even in their heroic moments, whilst Berlioz is Romantic in the French way: flamboyant, with a touch of sternness. Chopin, the gentle cosmopolitanized Pole, is leagues away from him. Liszt is supposed to be more like him, and it is true that Liszt expresses some aspects of French Romanticism, but at

bottom they are quiet different.

What distinguishes Berlioz from other Romantics is his sternness — an underlying classical *hardness* — but owing to his unconventional and extravagant personality (in life as in music), his classical side has generally gone unnoticed. People are put off by his grandiloquence, which they mistake for bombast. But then they notice that passages which had seemed to be sheer melodrama sound better every time they are heard; a feeling of awe arises. It is not the awesomeness of Bach, or of Beethoven; these giants are kindly, full of goodness and pity, even at their most tremendous moments. It is distinctly cruel. Nor is it like Liszt or Wagner or Strauss or any of those other people who are so good at making our flesh creep. There is something voluptuous about them all; Berlioz is like iron — behind his flamboyant exterior is the grim austerity of a Torquemada. This is what saves him, at his most sensational, from being *merely* sensational. During Faust's "Ride to Hell" he spares us nothing — there is the utmost feeling of terror — but we don't think of eternal suffering (that would repel us) but of Punishment in the abstract, of Sin.

How does Berlioz achieve this hardness? It is partly his orchestration (grossly misunderstood — praised for the wrong reasons). For instance, the part with the bells, in the last movement of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, where the *Dies Irae* appears for the first time: those relentless, tramping thirds on the brass. This is worlds removed from the perfumed, sophisticated diabolism of Liszt, even the greater Liszt of the *Faust Symphony*. It is partly the conjunction of bells with pure brass coming just after bells with strings (clean-cut — the reverse of what generally goes by the name of orchestration) and partly the simple, diatonic harmony.

(The *Ride*, of course, is not so simple; it is harmonically very daring. But here we still get the "dry" orchestration and something I shall speak of later: his long melodic line.)

Or take another tremendous bit near the end of the same movement (the "Witches' Sabbath"). It is just before the *Dies Irae* comes back for the last time. There has been a hush; then a single cello starts the dance going again — one bad old witch dancing

## PHILIP BARR

all by herself — and one by one the other instruments all pile up on top of each other. Then he throws in more brass; it is like some devilish organ. At the height of the uproar he cuts off *all* the wind instruments. The strings are left alone, still playing the *Ronde du Sabbat*, and they instantaneously acquire an edge like the blade of any ax. For an instant — seven bars — they gleam, alone, dancing up and down in hard, naked thirds; then hell is let loose once more as the trombones enter with the *Dies Irae*.

He can do the same thing in quieter passages. Near the beginning of the "Royal Hunt" from *Les Troyens* there is a wicked little *tap-tap! ta-ta-ta tap!* triad in the woodwind. The chuckle of a satyr, in the forest.

Berlioz's orchestration has a sonorousness and brightness that are unlike either the garishness of Tschaikowsky or the opulence of Wagner. His orchestra is refined, economical — an instrument of precision, keen as a dentist's drill. Nobody knows better how to release a cataract of tone, but he does not harp on the grandiose note, and even at its loudest the music never sounds thick.

But the greatest confusion exists in many people's minds on this, the most discussed aspect of Berlioz. Even his detractors will admit that his orchestration is good, but they fail to see its importance because they have the habit of looking on orchestration as something subsidiary — a sort of purple parasol the composer flourishes in your face to make you overlook the imperfections in the music. But Berlioz's orchestration — apart from being the reverse of the Rimsky-Korsakovian sort of noise these people unconsciously have in mind — cannot be detached from the "music". The two things are one and the same. Those passages I have mentioned — in the *Fantastique* and *Les Troyens* — would be meaningless in a transcription. Yet nobody who hears them can doubt that the sound they produce has *musical* significance.

It all comes round to the old fallacy that the test of good orchestral music is its ability to sound well on the piano. Berlioz is a good illustration of the opposite; it is because he is a great instrumental stylist that he should never be transcribed. I cannot imagine what he would sound like on the piano; presumably pretty bad, though Liszt made an arrangement of the *Fantastique* and I can never get over the story of Hugo Wolf being asked



Caricature of Berlioz, 1857

to play the piano at a wedding party; he sat down and played the "Marche au Supplice" and the bride fainted . . . . But too many people make this distinction between the instrumentation of a piece and what they reverently but erroneously call "the notes themselves". There is no such thing as the notes themselves; if you want the notes *as written* you had better provide yourself with a battery of tuning-forks — otherwise you will get overtones, i. e. *other notes*, and there you are, already committed to the deadly sin of "orchestration".

If Berlioz's orchestration has been misunderstood, it has at least been praised. But there is something else which has been both misunderstood and consistently attacked: his form.

There is some excuse for this. It isn't a question of his departures from orthodox sonata form (no sensible person minds those) but of a disconcerting habit he has of breaking off in the middle of a build-up.

At first it makes you think he has no form at all; it is exasperating. There is one royal

bit of movie-music in the first movement of the *Fantastique* where the strings all move in big block chords at top speed up and down the chromatic scale — the wood-wind uttering wild yawps. When he suddenly breaks this off you could murder him. But after several hearings, lo! you discover that what follows is both fascinating in itself and appropriate to the moment: it is the return of the *Idée Fixe* over that mysterious, rhythmic string accompaniment. You come to anticipate the interruption with delight.

But Berlioz's utter nerve in making such sudden changes is something that takes getting used to. You have to learn a new logic, a logic of felicitous switches rather than consummations. Granted this is a Titan's method, not an Olympian's; Beethoven, shall we say, would have kept the line continuous. But a good Titan is worth a dozen false Olympians — composers who must preserve their "continuity" at any cost and achieve nothing but a platitude. (And speaking of Beethoven — how about the last quartets? How about the first movement of Op. 130? — plenty of interruptions there.)

Not that Berlioz doesn't overdo it sometimes. The overtures are bad offenders; the worst in this respect is the *Beatrice and Benedict* which should have been his best (with its radiance and delicacy) but is spoiled by too many interruptions, especially near the end. Here you can really say that the form is weak. And one must confess that Berlioz, in trying to get away from his old device of ending with the big theme on trombones over a riot of strings, seems ill at ease. The composition ends very abruptly (though we should remember that this would matter less if the opera followed immediately; it is not a "concert-overture"). But the *Fantastique*, with all its interruptions and other oddities, now seems to me more unified than most of the post-Beethoven symphonies, with all their lip-service to sonata form. His design has a logic of its own, and when you have grasped this logic — then you perceive the magic of his quieter passages. You are no longer bored by the simple harmonies, the "thinness" of the "Scène aux Champs", its lack of sensuous appeal; you feel its mysterious atmosphere in the succession of events.

Yet the legend of the "inspired incompetent" still goes on. This is partly the fault of the older text-books; they built Berlioz up as a mere "influence", a great revolutionary "figure" instead of a great composer, so nowadays — with our minds full of Harriet Smithson, "Les Grotesques de la Musique", Paganini, the Camille Moke episode with the

pistols and the laudanum and all the rest of it, Cherubini chasing Berlioz round the library, Berlioz conducting the *Symphonic Funèbre et Triomphale* in the open square with drawn sword, Witches' Sabbaths, Rides to Hell, thirty-two kettledrums, the Tuba Mirum with its four brass bands packed in separate corners of the hall and the regular orchestra in the middle — nowadays most of us go to him to be shocked; when he shocks us, we disapprove; when he doesn't, we demand our money back, and in truth you will hear as many complaints of Berlioz's frigidity as you will of his extravagance any day of the week. While all the time his classical side, the *positive* nature of his austerity, is overlooked.

Even an astute critic like Sir Donald Tovey has to grumble at Berlioz's way of going to work, though the results make him shout with admiration. It is permissible, nay laudable, to point out a favorite's errors, but Sir Donald writes as though he did not know his own mind; he clings to standards which he has himself condemned time without number, standards which nobody knows better than he to be as arbitrary as those which guided Rimsky-Korsakow in his corrections of *Boris*.

What if Berlioz could not write a regular "first movement"? I see no evidence that he ever even tried to. Sir Donald practically admits as much in what he says about the sonata-expositions. He likes them, regardless that they "are quite flat and do not establish their complementary key", and decides — sensibly enough — "why call them sonata-expositions?" He can find no fault with the final result, in performance. Of course one is glad that Berlioz can wring so much enthusiasm from an unwilling admirer. Unfortunately other critics, with less wit and penetration than Sir Donald, have jibbed at Berlioz's unconventionality and stopped right there.

Berlioz's melodies, too, have been adversely criticized. Most of them do, at first, sound rather dry and angular. But as the theme comes round again and again (not broken up, but complete—in tone-poem style) we grasp its meaning. No other tune would do. Its thin, dry flavor takes hold of you; anything with the symmetry, the *sheer* beauty of a Schubert melody, would be out of place. An important feature of many of these themes is their length. How many people, for instance, can whistle the *Idée Fixe* right through? It is twenty-two bars long. It usually turns out that your eye was too close — stand away from it, see it as a whole. The question of form, once more.

Of course there are some Berlioz themes that strike you immediately. Faust's "Invocation to Nature," and the last theme to appear in the *Benvenuto Cellini Overture* — the one stormy, the other graceful — both impassioned; here it is easy to see the long, superbly sustained melodic line. Though sometimes, I grant you, he is odd and angular and very little else. *The Flea Song*, for example, takes a deal of swallowing.

(The "Invocation" is generally recognized as one of Berlioz's masterpieces. An absolute Gustave Doré — note the dark, jagged eloquence of the bass strings at "Oui, soufflez ouragans". Berlioz is like no other musician but he constantly recalls his fellow Frenchmen of the Romantic Movement in other fields. The "Fete of the Capulets," of course, has nothing to do with Shakespeare; it is pure Balzac — one of those glittering Balzac-parties with doom and frustration in the background.)

But people lament the "lack of passion" in Berlioz. The "Invocation," yes, they admit, that has passion and so have one or two other things; but mostly they find him cold.

They overlook the glamor with which he charges brief moments. In Berlioz, one must not look for Schubert's or Schumann's sustained nostalgia (anyway the French only get stickily sentimental when they try for such effects). Take that place in the "Fete of the Capulets" where the ballroom theme returns — magically orchestrated, with octave woodwind above, plucked strings below—a giant hurdy-gurdy accompanied by a giant guitar. In the midst of this uproar there is one bar in a minor key. It passes in a flash — but in that flash you have not only a hurdy-gurdy but a nostalgic hurdy-gurdy; you perceive not only the revel, but the soul of the revel.

Or better still, the sudden hush which follows that grand, rhetorical passage for strings in the "Scène aux Champs". Here is poetry of the highest order; a true pastoral — all the magic of the evening, descending on the countryside.

But this brings me to the question of his descriptive writing. A lot has been said about this, and without much bearing on his musical stature. The older critics say you have to know the story to enjoy his music, but actually it is often the other way about. Berlioz's "programs" show a lack of proportion which you seldom find in the actual music; and extravagance and bombast which have done more than anything else to blind people to the refinement of his technique. The story is often a hindrance; you would be better off making up a story of your own, or with no

story. He does not even keep to it; Tovey has made mincemeat of the *King Lear Overture* — considered programmatically — and with great fairness.

But he is wonderful at telling *parts* of the story. "The Ride to Hell" is the last word in descriptive writing, though even there I do not care to follow all the words — that hair-raising sound that is meant for the "hideous monster" which pursues them, I much prefer to think of as the distant noises of hell-fire. If you must think of the story, it is better to be content with broad outline; if you try to correlate all the details you will land in absurdities. Thus Romeo — if you take the first appearance of the Love-Theme literally — falls in love with Juliet before entering the ballroom, presumably on seeing her through a window. But if you take it poetically — as an anticipation by the orchestra of coming events — it is perfectly appropriate.

And then there are moments which he hits off with rare psychology. Just before that appearance of the Love Theme there is a sudden key change, and a soft thrum-thrumming begins — it is the first, faint sound of the ball. Only it doesn't sound as if it were beginning; that is the whole point. The key-change makes it sound like an interruption or, rather, as if you were the interruption; you feel as if it had been going on long before.

(Both this passage and the one I mentioned in the "Scène aux Champs" get their effect by a sudden hush, a sudden key-change. By "breaks" — interruptions — in other words, the very thing in Berlioz which used to annoy us.)

Berlioz has something in common with another composer who has come to the fore within the last ten years — Sibelius. It is true that Sibelius has now become popular and in his own lifetime furthermore, but he, too, had to wait while younger men passed him in the race; his vogue was delayed, and for much the same reasons as Berlioz's.

Like Berlioz, he has an originality which is not immediately apparent; he is often harmonically conservative (for his day and age) and prefers novel juxtapositions to the use of novel material. Moreover, his design has some of the same puzzling features as Berlioz's; there are the same "breaks". And there is his crystal-pure orchestration, unrealizable in a transcription — the same intense coloring in passages for strings alone.

There the likeness stops. Considered as personalities, they are far apart. Sibelius is of the North and his mature work has none of

Berlioz's flaming rhetoric; it is precisely when he is most volcanic that he is most impersonal, as in the brass section of *Tapiola*.

We are getting to know Berlioz a little better nowadays, largely thanks to the phonograph, though such things as the *Requiem*, the *Te Deum* and most of *Les Troyens* (his masterpieces, so the experts say) are still almost unheard. Those who have heard him often enough usually get to like him and, incidentally, quite simple people often take to him at once — they are not ashamed to enjoy his more "powerful" passages. Berlioz makes strange bed-fellows, but the wise man does not disdain the support of the *Danse-macabre*-fan or even the 1812-fan; it is a matter for rejoicing that this music should make an obvious appeal, along with its very subtle one. Indeed, I have no patience with obscurantism about Berlioz—Mr. Cecil Gray (one of his staunchest admirers) talks of the Berlioz-enthusiasts as if they were a lonely race apart who have no desire to make converts; I deny this—there is no one who makes me so want to proselytise, for with all his puzzling moments he is an essentially thrilling composer, whose big French gesture is something you should enjoy in an enthusiastic crowd.

I will grant that he is not for every day. He puts you in a mood, then whisks you out of it; he is a little cruel — too bracing; he won't do if you are feeling sentimental, or tired. Yet even then how often I have responded to his magic stimulus.

Something else is in Berlioz's favor, too; the present trend of taste. Since the '90's we have become excessively Northernized, but now we are beginning to change back again. Very slowly, it is true; we still like our music good and thick — Brahms and Wagner and so forth. The "Mediterranean style" is out of fashion — we have been reacting against the ultra-Italian taste of our grandparents — apparently it is impossible for most of us to enjoy the two things at once; when one goes up the other has to come down. Well, be that as it may, the Italian bucket is on the rise once more. I am not thinking so much of Italian composers as of composers like Handel — who represent the Italian rather than the Flemish tradition; the simple, clear-cut and dramatic rather than the elaborately contrapuntal and introspective. Handel is going up again and though Berlioz makes a queer sort of Italian and would have been horrified to find himself in the company of "that barrel of pork and beer"

(by the way, his reputation for critical acumen has always astonished me), I expect to see him go up too, and for some of the same reasons. He will, at any rate, be better understood when we have an age that appreciates the value of *sound* — not to mention style — as an ingredient in music, that can distinguish between splendor and vulgarity, between harmonic simplicity and insipidity; that has respect for clarity of texture and purity of line.

• •

There are three conductors who have made outstanding Berlioz recordings — Harty, Beecham, and Monteux. Harty is the least good of the three in my estimation; his recordings are rather old and he often tends to hurry the music. Still, his *Royal Hunt and Storm* from *Les Troyens* (Columbia disc 68043D) is well worth having and even more so is his *Romeo's Reverie* and *Fete at the Capulets* (Columbia History, Vol. 4). Best of all is his *Beatrice and Benedict Overture* (Columbia disc 68342D).

Beecham is an even finer Berlioz conductor and has been the recipient of much better recording. His *Roman Carnival* (Columbia disc 68921D) is perhaps the finest orchestral record ever made, even if the Saltarello could go a tiny bit faster in my way of thinking. His latest recording — selections (the usual) from *The Damnation of Faust* (Columbia set X-94), requires a good machine to do it full justice since it is on the over-brilliant side.

Musically, I rate Monteux the greatest of the three conductors in the music of Berlioz; his *Benvenuto Cellini Overture* (Victor discs 11140-41) and his *Fantastic Symphony* (Victor set M-111) are classics. The latter of course is getting a little old (it dates from October, 1931), hence if you wish up-to-date sharpness in recording you must get the new Columbia set conducted by Selmar Meyrowitz (set No. 267), but this is not so fine an interpretation and contains an inexcusable cut. The complete *Damnation of Faust* exists in an abridged and by no means first-rate French version; the *Requiem* and the *Te Deum* not at all.

George Thill, the French tenor, has made a brilliant record of a telling scene from *Les Troyens à Carthage* (Columbia disc 9098M) and there is an excellent record of a particularly fine Berlioz excerpt — *Le Repos de la Ste. Famille* — from his *L'Enfance du Christ* (Columbia 69340D).

*The Trapp  
Family at home.*



## THE TRAPP FAMILY

### SOME NOTES AND A REVIEW

**T**HE RECORDINGS OF THE TRAPP FAMILY Choir, issued this month by Victor\*, should prove very welcome indeed to admirers of early choral music. For not since the English Singers have we had more admirable transparency and balance, or such delightful intimacy and refinement of expression in the singing of contrapuntal music of the 15th and 16th centuries.

The singing family of Baron George von Trapp is unique in this day and age, although not entirely without precedent in fairly recent times.\*\* In the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods a singing family like this was neither a rarity nor an oddity, but instead a rather common phenomenon. In those days a gentleman's education was incomplete without his being able to participate in music. Almost every one in an aristocrat's family joined in the singing of madrigals, part songs and rounds; and visitors were likewise expected to participate. Contrapuntal choralism was common domestic

and convivial usage; its enjoyment unlimited. As a matter of fact the simpler rounds and madrigals (particularly those with humorous or bawdy words) were in high favor among the common people. The "ear" for music was not confined to the aristocracy, nor evidently the ability to sing compositions of more than one line, despite the fact that few of the people could either read or write, to say nothing of decipher music. But music apparently has never depended upon scribes entirely to perpetuate it. And as regards music appreciation, it would seem to have been of a high order when one considers the quality and character of much of the music of the period under discussion.

It has been said that in concert the Trapp Family present a modernized version of what an evening might have been in the home of some Elizabethan gentleman or of such an

\*EARLY CHORAL MUSIC, sung by the Trapp Family Choir (mixed voices unaccompanied), Dr. Franz Wasner, Director. Victor set M-535, five 10-inch discs, price \$7.50.

\*\*According to Dr. Carleton Sprague Smith of the New York Public Library Music Division there was a similar group — the Rainer Family — heard here during the 1840s, which specialized in folk songs. Curiously enough the Rainers were ancestors of Baron von Trapp's wife, and like the Trapp Choir comprised eight members — the children of the butcher Josef Rainer, a well-known tenor of his day.

illustrious musical family as the Bachs. Their repertoire, embracing over 500 selections, is drawn mostly from a-cappella choral compositions of the 15th and 16th centuries, but the family also specializes in folk songs, and is proficient in playing on "Block-flutes".\*\*\* All of the children play an instrument, and some of them two or three instruments. When the family travels it takes with it a spinet, a viola da gamba and seven Block-flutes. Their interest in these instruments began as the result of a footnote on a composition they were singing, which stated that "this song is also effective when played upon Block-flutes." This footnote prompted them to acquire some of the old instruments. Six months later, they had not only mastered them but had also built up a sizeable repertoire of selections for them.

There are eight singing members of the Trapp Family Choir: five daughters — Agatha, Maria, Hedwig, Johanna and Martina; two sons — Rupert and Werner; and the Baroness herself. The group is under the direction of a close friend of the family, Dr. Franz Wasner, a young priest and an accomplished musician.

Baron von Trapp descends from an old Austrian family that comes from Salzburg. As was the custom in Austrian families for many generations, music was an essential part of the life of his family. His children were taught to sing and play instruments in their early childhood; but singing was especially emphasized. Beginning with folk songs and simple lieder, they soon became interested in part-singing — in madrigals and all types of a-cappella music.

Five years ago when a folk song competition was arranged in Salzburg the family joined in just for the fun of it. To their great surprise they won the first prize. It was at this time that Lotte Lehmann heard them sing in their own home and encouraged them to a public career. "There is gold in your throats," said the famous soprano, "and it would be a pity to sing only for yourselves."

Encouraged by what Mme. Lehmann said the family undertook several concerts which were enthusiastically received. After the folk song competition they were invited to sing at a festival former Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg gave at the Belvedere Palace. When the Duke of Windsor (then the Prince of Wales) visited Salzburg he was so much impressed with the recital of the family that he invited

\*\*\*Belonging to the recorder family, the "Block-flute" was very popular during the 16th and 17th centuries. The "Block" referred to the plug or stopper in which the mouthpiece is inserted.

them to sing for him in London. Thereafter began a series of concerts in London, Paris, The Hague, Brussels, Milan and Rome, and more recently in cities of the United States. Here, they have been received as enthusiastically as in Europe. Their concert in New York brought forth unanimous expressions of critical praise. Aware of the significance of this unusual group RCA-Victor signed them up for a series of recordings.

Following an old tradition the members of this talented family wear the picturesque old costumes of their own country. As they sing so they live. Touring the American countryside in a bus recently, with thirty-eight pieces of luggage, the ten members of this family presented a happy, enthusiastic group, whose music-making, like their exuberance, was truly infectious. "We aim to show our audiences," the Baroness says, "that although the name of Austria is dead, its culture and its art continue to live."

All but one of the selections the Trapp Choir has chosen for its first recording release were written by 16th-century composers. There are twelve compositions on five ten-inch records, the whole presenting a well-chosen and well-contrasted recital.

From Paul Hofhaimer (1459-1537), court organist to Emperor Maximilian I, comes their first selection — a tender love song, *Mein Einigs A*, never before recorded (disc 1960). On the reverse face is the familiar *Innsbruck ich muss dich lassen* by Heinrich Isaac (1450-1517). Isaac, who was court composer to Maximilian, wrote this song as a farewell to his sweetheart. A half century later it became a chorale, and many years later its melody was used in the chorales Nos. 16 and 44 in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

*Es ist ein' Rose entsprungen* (disc 1961) is a Christmas song of great popularity. It was written by Michael Praetorius (1571-1621), one of the foremost musical scholars of his day. There have been a number of recorded performances of this composition but none, in our estimation, that equalled the Trapp's. On the reverse face of the same record is another Christmas song — *Zu Bethlehem Geboren*, written by an unknown composer of the 17th century.

To Orlando de Lassus (1532-1594), the celebrated Flemish composer, the choir turns next for two selections (disc 1962). The first is the *Soldier's Song*, better known in its original Italian — *Matona mia cara*. This has been recorded a number of times, recently most effectively by The Madrigalists (in Musicraft Album No. 20). The Trapp Choir, in

their artistic performance, proves that this song is as effective in German as it is in Italian. On the reverse record side is Lassus' humorous *Die Martinsgans* and an appropriate companion, *Ein Hennlein Weiss* by Antonio Scandelli, an Italian contemporary of Lassus who lived in Germany.

From Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612), one of the famous composers of his time, come the next selections, both on one record face (disc 1963) — *Feinslieb du hast mich G'fangen*, a tender love song, and *Tanzen und Springen*, a ballet. On the reverse face of the record is a humorous song, *Wohlauf Ihr Lieben Gäste*, by Thomas Sartorius (1577-1637) of whom little is known.

The next selection (disc 1964) is *Il bianco e dolce cigno*, a celebrated madrigal, by Jacob Arcadelt, the distinguished 16th-century Flemish composer and teacher. There are several settings of this text (which concerns itself with the theme of the dying swan) dating from about the same period as this one. In the album of The Madrigalists two of these, the present one and another by the Italian composer Vecchi, offer interesting contrast. Lassus also made a setting of the text, one familiar in a solo as well as a choral setting. The Trapp Choir has made a lovely recording of the Arcadelt madrigal. For their last selection the group turns to John Dowland (1563-1626), the famous English madrigalist and lutenist. That deeply expressive madrigal, *Come Heavy Sleep*, which Max Meili recently sang with lute accompaniment (Victor set M-495), is here given in its choral arrangement. Of the two versions, we find the Meili more moving, but this is not meant to convey that the singing of the Trapps is lacking in requisite artistry. As a matter of fact, the finely coordinated quality and balance of this choir's tonal production is an everlasting pleasure. And since the recording does justice to the singers (despite some occasional clicks to disturb the otherwise quiet tracking of the needle), these records should do much to popularize the music at hand.

—P. H. R.

## OVERTONES

### European Record Releases

#### England

- DVORAK: *Second Symphony*; Czech Phil. Orch., dir. Talich. HMV DB3685-89.  
SCHUBERT: *Fifth Symphony*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Beecham. Eng. Col. LX8424-6.

MOZART: *Piano Concerto in E fl., K. 449*; Rudolf Serkin and Busch Chamber Players. HMV DB3690-2.

MOZART: *Piano Concerto in C, K.503*; Kathleen Long and Boyd Neel Orch. Eng. Decca X229-32.

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio Overture*; London Phil. Orch., dir. Weingartner. Eng. Col. LX784.

BEETHOVEN: *Waldstein Sonata*; Walter Gieseking. Eng. Col. LX781-3.

SCHUMANN: *Toccata in C, Op. 7*; Anatole Kitain. Eng. Col. DX901.

MOZART: *Serenade in D major, K.239*; Adolf Busch Chamber Players. HMV DA1673-4.

SCARLATTI: *Eleven Sonatas*; played by Robert Casadesu. Eng. Col. LX778-80.

BACH: *Cello Suites Nos. 1 and 6*, for solo cello; Pablo Casals. The Bach Society, Vol. 7 (7 discs).

BEETHOVEN: *Rondo a Capriccio, Op. 129*; *Rondo in A major*; *Six Variations, Op. 34*; *Fantasy, Op. 77*; *Six Bagatelles, Op. 126*; Artur Schnabel. HMV DB3623-9. Beethoven Society, Vol. 14.

VITTORIA: *Ave Verum Corpus*; and PALESTRINA: *Super Flumina*; Westminster Abbey Choir. Eng. Col. DB1836.

VERDI: *Requiem—Ingemisco*; and ROSSINI: *Stabat Mater—Cujus animam*; Jussi Björling. HMV DB3665.

#### France

COUPERIN: *Motet—Venite Exultemus Domino*; sung by Erika Rokyta, and G. Cernay, with P. Brunold, organ. Oiseau-Lyre No. 49.

COUPERIN: *Motet—Adolescentulus Sum*; sung by Rokyta with organ. No. 50.

COUPERIN: *4th Concert Royal*; Instrumental Ensemble dir. R. Desormière. O-L 51-52.

COUPERIN: *Neuvième Concert*; Instrumental Ensemble. O-L 73-74.

COUPERIN: *Second Leçon des Ténèbres*; sung by Lise Daniels with organ. O-L 43 and 47.

BACH: *Organ Toccata and Fugue in D minor*; Ed. Commette. Fr. Col. DFX218.

FRANCK: *Pièce Héroïque*; Ed. Commette. Fr. Col. DFX219.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval de Vienne, Op. 26*; Yves Nat. Fr. Col. LFX553-55.

#### Germany

STRAUSS: *Don Juan*; Karl Böhm and Sächsische Staatskapelle. Electrola DB4625-6.

BEETHOVEN: *Trio in D, Op. 70, No. 1*; Ely Ney Trio. Elect. DB4587-90.

STRAUSS: *Daphne*—*O wie gern blieb ich bei dir, and Götter! Brüder im hohen Olympos*; sung by Margarete Teschemacher and Torsten Ralf. HMV DB4628.

STRAUSS: *Daphne*—*Verwandlung der Daphne*; sung by Margarete Teschemacher. HMV DB4627.

Igor Gorin, the baritone, paused in his current concert tour this past week to record an album of Moussorgsky songs and also four of his own compositions with orchestra.

## The Library Shelf

GEORGE BIZET, by Martin Cooper, 136 pp. New York: Oxford University Press. Price \$2.75.

■ This book is a centenary tribute to the composer of *Carmen*, who was born on October 25, 1838. It is by no means a pretentious book; in fact it can hardly be said to do full justice to its subject. Although it provides an outline of Bizet's career and an estimate of his art, it spends much too much space on the plots of his operas. Its assertion that Bizet died because of overwork may be true, but the statement, "more especially by the trouble and disappointment of *Carmen*," has been too often questioned not to be at least amplified. The author states that this opera was first performed on March 3, 1875, and "was not a success." In view of the fact that 37 performances of it were given from March to June of that year, and 17 more the following winter, this would not seem to be entirely true. It may have been unsuccessful the first night, but subsequently it would seem to have "caught on."

The author does not seem to be correctly informed about the *Habañera* and its inclusion in the score of *Carmen*. He refers to it as trash, whereas its authenticity and character have caused it to be regarded as one of the best airs in the opera. He neglected to mention that it was not Bizet's own composition, but was an adaptation by him of a song in *Fleurs d'Espagne* by Yradier (of *La Paloma* fame).

There are several curious errors in the volume, one of which is the author's reference to Massenet's "dream scene in *Mignon*" in his chapter on *The Pearl Fishers*.

Mr. Cooper is neither overly enthusiastic nor disparaging about Bizet. His observations on the composer are strangely summed up in one short paragraph, in which he states that the tragedy of Bizet "does not lie in the opposition he met in his lifetime" but in the fact "that he developed late and died young." It is the epitaph of many others. Bizet is unquestionably best known as the composer of *Carmen*, and as Mr. Cooper says, even though this opera has its detractors, so long as it is heard by more than professional critics, "Bizet's name will be known all over the world." The book is attractively bound in a salmon-pink cover and is neatly printed and liberally sprinkled with musical illustrations from Bizet's works.

SO THIS IS MUSIC. By William W. Johnson. Pitman Pub. Co. New York, 1938. Price \$1.40.

■ Founder and Chairman of the National Gramophonic Societies and also an educator, and author of several books, Mr. Johnson in this, his latest book, writes informally on music for young folks, using Mr. Pepys of diary fame as his starting point. Mr. Pepys was, according to Mr. Johnson, "a man whose life bubbled over with music," hence he contends that "if music ever means as much" to his reader "as it did to Mr. Pepys" then that person "will indeed be fortunate."

The book is entertaining, and although confined to generalizations, succeeds admirably in covering a lot of ground. One suspects that much of the material grew out of informal talks to young people, and since the author is obviously expanding his subject, he has avoided complication; the spirit of informality dearly loved by all youth is preserved. Mr. Pepys and the music of the 17th century offers a good starting point but by the end of the book the author has taken us through considerable musical history and brought us up to the polytonality of Bartok. Musical instruments are described, there is musical explanation and discussion, and the lives of great composers are briefly summarized.

One of the best features of the book is the illustrations, which Mr. Johnson has made himself. To say that this book is confined to young people would be doing the writer and his publishers an injustice. Besides opening up a new interest to young people "by showing them the joy and delight that can be gained from an understanding and appreciation of music," it can help foster and develop interest in many older music lovers.

## EMMA EAMES AND HER RECORDS

STEPHEN FASSETT

■ IT WAS MY PLEASURE TO PRESENT OVER Station WQXR in New York on the evening of Thursday, February 2nd, in person and via her records, the illustrious American soprano, Emma Eames, as the first celebrity in a new series of broadcasts called "Great Singers". In honoring myself and the station with her presence, Mme. Eames consented to make her first radio appearance. For those who did not hear this broadcast, the comments of this great singer, who belonged to the "Golden Age of Opera", will undoubtedly be of interest. The records heard on the air were chosen by the singer, and her comments not only upon these records but upon recording in general in the early days of the acoustical era, when the lady appeared before the recording horn, were decidedly illuminating.

Those who knew the artistry of Emma Eames claim there was a thrilling, vibrant quality to her voice. In the perfection of her singing there was the expression of a deep humanity and a true elevation of spirit. A vision of rare beauty, she imbued each of her roles with the living personality of the character. Elsa, Tosca, Aida, Desdemona and Juliette were among her inimitable creations.

It is not an unfamiliar comment to collectors that the recordings of the great singers of the past do not do them justice. One must be able to hear beyond actual sounds at times, as Mr. Waldeck suggested in his excellent article last month. The existent records of Mme. Eames were made at a time when recording was both a hazardous and a trying experience. But, although they represent the artistry of this singer less vividly than later recordings would have, they are nonetheless



*Emma Eames as Marguerite*

useful examples of her rare style. Regarding recording facts Mme. Eames' memory is somewhat vague. Her Victor records sounded much better to her at the time of making them, when played back directly from the wax, than they did later when pressed on regular commercial material.

The best recordings she made, in her opinion, were on cylinders. She states: "In the nineties I made two cylinder recordings at the Gramophone House in London which reproduced my voice perfectly. The selection, as I recall it, was Elisabeth's Prayer from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*." One wonders whether she sang the whole Prayer dividing it on two cylinders, or whether she made some other selection which at the moment she has forgotten. Because she regarded the quality of her voice from these recordings more highly than from any others it is to be hoped that they will turn up some time.

Before permitting Mme. Eames to speak for herself, I would like to say that almost everyone who heard her talk on the air remarked on the extraordinary beauty of her speaking voice. What one critic said seems to summarize the general opinion: "Mme. Eames proved to be the best woman speaker I have ever heard on the air."

After greeting the radio audience at the opening of the broadcast Mme. Eames said: "It is a pity that we of what is commonly called the 'Golden Age of Opera' should not have had better facilities for recording our voices and our interpretative artistry. To a sensitive person the conditions were unnerving, for we had to sing carefully into the center of a horn to the accompaniment of an orchestra which invariably sounded out of tune, owing to the fact that metal horns were affixed to the wooden sound chambers of the violins. In the case of a vibrant and brilliant voice like mine, as one approached a climax or a high tone the effect intended was frequently turned into an anticlimax for fear of a blast. At such times one was gently drawn back from the horn so that instead of a ringing high note, the tone sounded as though one had retired into the next room. The process enervated me, and I felt that even with the most satisfactory results my voice would be diminished and caricatured, softer vibrations being completely eliminated. It is only here and there in my Victor records that one can form an idea of the real quality of sound that came from me at that time. However, since time cannot be put back twenty years to permit me to sing for you in person, I have chosen six records which are, with all their mechanical faults, among the best I made.

"My Gounod selections are documents as well as interpretations, for at the beginning of my career I studied personally with him the roles of Marguerite, Juliette and Mireille. It was as the heroine of his *Romeo et Juliette* that I made my operatic debut fifty years ago, and I call special attention to my recording of the *Waltz* from this opera, which is sung as Gounod taught it to me, absolutely in time and without the meaningless holds and retards that one so often hears."

(Here the recording of the *Waltz* was played, a recording which has long been prized by collectors.)

"While in Venice on my wedding trip in 1891," the singer said after the selection was completed, "I studied the role of Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which was then the role of the hour, for the opera was less than a year old and was taking all Europe by storm. It was as Santuzza that I appeared in my first performance at the Metropolitan that same year. Two years later I relinquished this role to Emma Calvé in order that that great French soprano might make her American debut in one of her most effective portrayals. I have chosen Santuzza's aria as one of my best records, and as one contrasting strongly

with the florid display of the first recording."

Mme. Eames originally planned to use her recording of the *Roi de Thule* from *Faust*, which she likes very much (that is as much as she likes any of her records), but she decided it was lacking in the requisite contrast to Juliette's *Waltz*. A suggestion that her recording of Hahn's *L'Incredule* and Mrs. Beach's *The Year's at the Spring* (both on one side) be played was not accepted by the singer. She expressed her approval of this record, however, and stated that she had never heard it properly reproduced before, but she felt the climax of the second song was unduly muffled. After the playing of Santuzza's aria, the singer spoke briefly of her vocal artistry and her career in opera.

"I possessed a naturally flexible voice, with a natural trill and a perfect chromatic scale. I had a large working range, from A below the staff to C sharp above. I worked hard at my technique always, and strove to eliminate every muscular effort that would hinder the free production of tone. My diction was clear, my pronunciation absolutely unfettered. Because of this, I was left free at all times to think only of the feeling or the thought to be projected.

"Besides the Gounod roles, my repertoire included the following parts — Elisabeth, Elsa and Sieglinde of Wagner; the Countess in *Nozze di Figaro*, both Donna Anna and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* as well as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* of Mozart; Aida, Desdemona and Amelia among others of Verdi; and of course Tosca of Puccini.

"I was so enchanted and absorbed by my work that it proves to me the wisest course is to mind one's own business exclusively. I had to detach myself from outside influences in order to find simplicity, sincerity and truth in my interpretations; hence I tried not to see others in roles that I was to portray. Nor did I read any criticisms of my singing, good or bad, as I was my own most merciless critic and knew better than anyone what my objectives were. I never had a press agent nor would I meet critics; if I deserved praise they could not withhold it and if they knew me they might not like me and be influenced."

(Here followed the broadcast of the singer's 1905 recording of the *Jewel Song* from *Faust*. And after this came her recording of Tosti's song *Dopo*.)

"It was during the season of 1905-1906 that I went on the first of my nation-wide tours," the singer then said. "One of my assisting artists at this time was the famous cellist,

Hollman, who wrote the popular *Chanson d'Amour*, which I successfully featured during that tour and recorded, with him playing the cello obbligato."

This record, which has long been admired as one of Mme. Eames' best, was next played, and after it, as a final selection, came her recording of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, which has been praised at the most vital and telling interpretation of this difficult song on records.

"In 1909, while still at the height of my operatic career," the singer said at the end, "I retired from the Metropolitan Opera and after that sang only one concert tour in 1911-1912. My last public appearance took place in 1916 when I sang for charity in Portland, Maine."

It is the opinion of the writer that those records of Mme. Eames that are mentioned here are all worthy souvenirs of her artistry, but naturally some will have greater appeal than others to different collectors.



## RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

### ORCHESTRA

DELIUS: *Society Set - Vol. 3 - Appalachia, Variations on an Old Slave Song* (five discs), *Hassan - Closing Scene* (one disc), and *Irmelin - Prelude*, and *La Calina* from *Kounga* (one disc); played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set 355, price \$14.00.

■ Columbia justly points out that it is the phonographic god-father to Delius. With equal pride it may also point out that it sponsors most of the phonographic representations of Sir Thomas Beecham. Without Sir Thomas, Delius would not have been so splendidly represented on records; for Sir Thomas — more than anyone living — has sponsored public appreciation of the works of that strangely enigmatic solitary in music—Fredrick Delius.

The larger works of Delius are too rarely performed in public, which is understandable, since they entail extra expense for a large chorus and soloists. There is no ques-

tion that the greater part of the public are not attracted to Delius' music, and it is doubtful whether they ever will be. Delius is a "mood", his music is impressionistic, not picturesque, but purely contemplative. He possessed an extraordinarily sensitive response to the moods of nature, and these he imparted in several of his larger works. He was a tone-poet who conveyed reserved and secretive beauty. These are the qualities that one finds in his *Sea Drift* and in *Appalachia*. There are times when such music can almost completely submerge the individuality of the sensitive listener; and there are other times when it can leave one completely unimpressed. It is assuredly a mood; at least, so it strikes me.

*Appalachia* is said to be the old Indian name for North America, the name probably ascribed to the continent by the Appalachians, an eastern tribe from which the celebrated mountain chain derived its name. Delius' *Appalachia* is an orchestral composition founded upon an old negro melody, which he heard some Florida darkies sing when he was

an orange planter in the 1880s. Written in the variation form, it is developed technically very much like the composer's more familiar *Brigg Fair*, but is longer and employs a chorus. As in the rhapsody the composer opens his *Appalachia* with an atmospheric introduction but here it is more colorful and longer. The theme is not heard until bar 100 (about halfway through side 2). It is given out first by the English horn. Curiously like the motive that starts the celebrated quartet in *Rigoletto*, it lends itself well to elaborate treatment. After its announcement (with repetition) comes the first variation, a short one, in which the contrapuntal lines move in characteristically dissonant fashion. The second variation (beginning side 3) is a long one, occupying a whole record face. It is in ternary form and is distinguished by a middle *lento* section, exquisitely ethereal in effect. The next variation (side 4) is preceded by a short introduction. Lively in character at first, it gradually grows calmer. It employs the chorus for the first time for purposes of coloring. The next variation (side 6) is quicker in tempo, but the one that follows (side 7) is tranquil in character. Here the theme is allotted to the horns, and is effectively heard through descending contrapuntal lines of strangely beautiful and haunting dissonances. Side 8 contains a variation in the style of a march. With side 9 we come to the final chorus. This begins with an *acappella* chorus which is followed by a *lento* passage, richly harmonious and poetically nostalgic. The epilogue makes use of a verse relating to the separation of negroes from each other. There is in these last pages some of the same heartbreak quality that one finds in *Sea Drift*.

The rest of the album represents the lesser Delius. The best of the three selections is the *Closing Scene* from the incidental music that Delius composed for Flecker's poetic play—*Hassan*. This is effective music in a theatrical way, although of a true poetic character. I cannot understand why the *Irmelin Prelude* was chosen at this time; its mood is too slight and lacking in contrast. The dance from *Koanga* is more effective but it says nothing new for the composer.

All this music Beecham interprets with obvious affection, yet never with overstressed sentiment or linear distortion. The chorus and the unnamed baritone soloist in the finale of *Appalachia* show competent training and direction. The reproduction is full and rich with appreciable shading, and the surfaces are good.

—P. H. R.

BOCCHERINI: *Minuet*; and RAMEAU, Arr. Wekerlin: *Musette* and *Tambourin*; played by Grand Orchestre Symphonique, conducted by F. Ruhlmann. Columbia disc 17131D, 10-inch, price \$1.00.

■ Boccherini's celebrated minuet comes from his *Quintet in E flat, Opus 15, No. 5*. In our estimation it is preferable in the string orchestra arrangement, which is practically the same as the original except for the doublings of parts.

The Rameau pieces are more welcome. They come from the composer's opera *Les Fetes d'Hebe*. The *Tambourin* is an ingenious piece that is probably familiar to everyone. Ruhlmann, of the Paris Opera, plays these things very well, and the recording, of the studio variety, is quite alright except that the surfaces are not too smooth.

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GERSHWIN: *Rhapsody in Blue*; *Second Rhapsody*; *Cuban Overture*; and *An American in Paris*; played by Paul Whiteman and his Concert Orchestra. Decca set 31, five discs, price \$5.50.

■ Deems Taylor says in his notes with this set, "it is more than fitting, it is inevitable that Paul Whiteman should record an album of George Gershwin's major orchestral works. For in one field of music the two men saw eye to eye." And no matter where the works were played for the first time, as Mr. Taylor further states, it was Whiteman and his orchestra who gave them their greatest number of performances.

Whatever posterity may think of Mr. Gershwin and his "symphonic jazz", there is no question that a large part of the public today regard his orchestral works highly. What matter that there is a repetition of material in all of them, that they make no serious claim to formal development; they own an infectious rhythmic buoyancy, a bit of that do-or-die American spirit that thumbs its nose at cares and unnecessary worries.

Here we have recordings of the famous *Rhapsody in Blue*, played as Whiteman originally played it years ago for Victor; a first recording of the *Second Rhapsody* — not so good but nonetheless characteristic Gershwiniana; and the *Cuban Overture* — always an effective number. Last but not least, Mr. Gershwin in Paris. Mr. Taylor supplies quite a bit of program for this last piece, a program which neither adds to nor takes away from the fun.

The performance of these pieces has been intrusted to Mr. Whiteman, as we have said.

the Mr. Whiteman of today, we might point out, for there is a great difference in the Mr. Whiteman who recorded a couple of these compositions for Victor some years back and the Mr. Whiteman who records them for Deca today, and there is a great difference in his orchestra. It must be admitted everything is very smooth and orderly here, but the old excitement, the old magic of the Whiteman who made such swell records for Victor is completely missing. Maybe it is the spirit of Gershwin that is missing, or have we — perish the thought — outgrown this music or grown to know it too well? Maybe it's the recording, which is good, but hardly comparable to what Victor and Columbia are giving us either in decibel range or in frequency range. Maybe these so-called higher-fidelity recordings have got us. We will not say we did not enjoy the recordings, but we must say they did not have the expected impact — and just to prove to ourselves we were not wrong we replayed the old Victor recordings and awoke to the realization that Whiteman's old concert orchestra was certainly a fine one. But for the money, well that's another story — after all you get what you pay for.

—P. G.

GRIEG: *Norwegian Dances Nos. 1 and 4, Opus 35*; played by Grande Orchestre Symphonique, conducted by F. Ruhlmann. Columbia disc 69409D, price \$1.50.

■ Grieg wrote a group of *Norwegian Dances*, founded on folk tunes, for piano solo and duet, and also for orchestra. Some years ago Columbia issued the four orchestral dances in a recording by Schneevoigt and the London Symphony. Here we have more up-to-date recordings of Nos. 1 and 4. The typical Grieg workmanship is evidenced here—short phrases and themes, contrasted of course. The dances are not without appeal, the first in a primitive sort of way, and the fourth with its harmonic coloring and its curious, quasi-oriental, slow interlude. The form of the dances is practically the same — fast, slow, fast, but the fourth dance places more emphasis on the slow section. Ruhlmann gives them both appropriately rousing performances. The recording, again of the studio variety, is good without being outstanding. There would seem to be no reason to replace Schneevoigt's recordings if one already owns them.

—P. G.

WOLF-FERRARI: *Secret of Suzanne-Overture*; and DVORAK: *Slavonic Dance in C major, Op. 72, No. 7*; played by the Boston 'Pops' Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 4412, 10-inch, price \$1.00.

■ Wolf-Ferrari's opera is musically a veritable delight. Its nonsensical story must seem silly to a modern woman who thinks nothing of smoking in public today. There is more than a touch of Mozart in this music, and it is the Mozartean spirit that Toscanini reveals when he plays it. One wishes that he had recorded it.

Festive and gay is the *C major Slavonic Dance* of Dvorak, one of the most popular in the two series. In character it is like a Polka; it abounds in dynamic changes. Fiedler renders both these pieces brightly with a healthy fervor, but there are nuances in both pieces that are not taken into consideration here.

The recording of both works is good, although that of the overture dates back almost two years.

—P. G.

SATIE: *Gymnopédie, Nos. 1 and 2*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Ten-inch Victor disc, No. 1965, price \$1.00.

■ The three piano pieces which Erik Satie called *Gymnopédies* date from the composer's twenty-second year, and they reveal the less familiar side of his talents. Those who seek for satire in this music are not destined to find it very amusing. The title is derived from an ancient Spartan festival in which each year naked youths danced in honor of Apollo, Artemus and Leto to commemorate the victory of the Spartans over the Argives at Thyrea. Satie's dances are subdued and profoundly serious. The first and third of them were orchestrated by the composer's friend Debussy, in whose arrangement their order is reversed: the third becomes No. 1 here and the first, No. 2. Needless to say the transcription is an impressively skillful one. Mr. Stokowski is always in sympathy with this kind of music, and he draws from the orchestra that tonal glory and warmth which he knows so well how to capture. The recording does him and the orchestra full justice, and the surfaces are sufficiently quiet.

The first of these dances has been available for some years as the filler for Koussevitzky's Ravel *Bolero*.

—P. M.

PURCELL: *Suite* for strings, four horns, two flutes and English horn; played by Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction John Barbirolli. Victor set M-533, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ Nearly a decade ago Barbirolli arranged a suite for strings from music by Purcell and recorded it for the National Gramophonic Society in England. It was a wholly charming work; and we hope that enough interest will be aroused by the present one to bring about its re-recording. In recent years interest in Purcell's music has been greatly advanced by the discovery of his skillfully contrived fantasias for strings. Purcell, who came before Bach, was a highly talented contrapuntist. He was an imaginative composer and quite able to present his thoughts in distinguished fashion. There are genuine lyric beauty and true depth of feeling in his slower movements, and real buoyancy in his quicker movements.

In the present suite Barbirolli has taken six contrasting movements from the dramatic works of Purcell, and arranged them into an effective unit. The first movement is taken from the music to the comedy *The Gordian Knot*; the second movement is from the music to the comedy *The Virtuous Wife*; the third and sixth movements are from the music to Dryden's *King Arthur*; the fourth movement is based on a piece in Vol. 15 of the Purcell Society Edition; and the fifth movement is an arrangement of the sorrowful lament of Dido in the opera *Dido and Aeneas*.

Music like this needs not words to describe it but ears to hear it. Its poetic symmetry and plangent beauty endures, even in any arrangement for modern orchestra like the present one, which stretches it somewhat beyond its true confines. Purcell anticipated the music of a later date; in his day his contrapuntal writing may well have been considered modern; it has not lost the right to be so classified today.

Barbirolli plays this music with apparent affection. The recording is realistically contrived, indeed perhaps a little too brilliant for this type of music.

•••

WAGNER: *Tannhäuser - Overture* (3 parts); and BORODIN: *Prince Igor - March*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia set X-123, price \$3.25.

■ It was in Paris, in 1841, that Wagner considered the idea of writing an opera based

on the story of *Tannhäuser*. Two years later he began his first sketches of the libretto, which at that time he called *Der Venusberg*. In the Spring of 1845 the opera was completed and the following Fall it was given its first production in Dresden.

The overture, like that of *The Flying Dutchman*, adheres to the basic principles of the classic form. Wagner makes good use of his thematic material, which is divided into two groups, illustrating the dramatic forces of the plot.

This overture hardly needs introduction to our readers; it is perhaps one of the most popular of all overtures and has been recorded at least a dozen times. Of former recordings, those of Karl Muck and Mengelberg undoubtedly rank as the best (the recent Stokowski recording deals with the Paris version of the overture). Mengelberg's recording has long been a prime favorite, and it must be said that the Dutchman gives quite a thrilling performance. But Beecham gives one of the most musical readings of this work that it has been our good fortune to hear.

From the beautiful dignity of the opening to the sonorous finale Sir Thomas never indulges in exaggeration. His performance of the Pilgrim's music is admirably restrained (side one), and its final phrases are played with exquisite serenity. Side 2 opens with the Venusberg music, which Sir Thomas conveys with rare sensitivity — one sees the Venusberg as though through a mist. It is followed, of course, by *Tannhäuser's* jubilant song to the goddess, and the development section of the overture which is based on the Venusberg music. In the end the principal theme, the Pilgrim's Chorus, returns and leads to a solemn climax. The final pages are set forth with a dramatic dignity all too seldom heard. The recording is excellent, with a rare clarity of instrumentation.

The *Prince Igor March*, really the introduction to the last act of the opera, is an old favorite of Sir Thomas', and he plays it with just the right incisiveness and zest.

—P. H. R.

## CONCERTO

BACH: *Concerto in A minor*, for clavier, flute, violin, and strings; played by Yella Pessl (harpsichord), Frances Blaisdell (flute), William Kroll (violin), and string orchestra, direction of Carl Bamberg. Victor set M-534, three discs, price \$6.50.

■ The three movements of this concerto are reworkings by Bach of sections drawn from

his earlier compositions. The outer movements are based on a prelude and fugue in A minor, for clavier; and the slow movement is derived from the corresponding part of the D minor organ sonata. The result of this arranging is a powerful, unified work that is a most welcome addition to the record lists.

The first movement has a tremendous driving force; it is based almost entirely on a restless triplet figure derived from the principal theme. The harpsichord is incessantly active here, supplying a harmonic background when it is not busy with solo work. The slow movement is a conversation for the three solo instruments. It begins with a dialogue between harpsichord and flute, with the violin playing an accompanying *pizzicato* figure. Later the violin joins the discourse while the flute accompanies. This conversation, though it touches no emotional depths, is harmonically and contrapuntally richly varied. The finale returns to the mood of the opening movement, with triplets reappearing in the harpsichord part. The formal pattern of the original fugue is here replaced by a kind of symphonic development, which produces passages in which Bach anticipates later orchestral treatment. Such a passage occurs when the triplets in the harpsichord are joined by a fragment of the main subject *pizzicato* first in the basses, then the second violins, then the violas, then the first violins, and finally the solo violin and flute.

The difficult harpsichord part is well handled by Miss Pessl, and Miss Blaisdell's pure tone contributes to a generally agreeable performance. Mr. Bamberger seems to be in complete control of the ensemble and his tempi and dynamics are unobjectionable. A minor weakness is a lack of plasticity in the rhythm. Few conductors of Bach seem to be able to overcome a mechanical regularity of accent. The recording is very good, except in the fast movements, where the balance could have been improved — the harpsichord seems too subdued and the flute too prominent.

...

MENDELSSOHN: *Concerto No. 1, in G minor, Op. 25*, for piano and orchestra; played by Ani Dorfmann and the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Walter Goehr. Columbia set No. X-124, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Mendelssohn seems slowly to be climbing up to his proper place in the affections of the music-loving public. We have fairly frequent opportunities, of course, to hear the violin concerto, two of the symphonies, a few piano pieces, and *Elijah*, but most of his

enormous output remains unknown to the present generation. Yet many of his rarely heard works are well worth an occasional performance for their beauty of line, for their sound construction, and for the quality of creative imagination and complete mastery of the elements of composition displayed in them.

The *G minor Concerto* is one of these works. It was composed in 1831 or 1832 and Mendelssohn played it with great success in Germany, France and England. There are three connected movements; and the recorders have wisely retained the carefully planned effect of the transitions between movements by choosing the "breaks" elsewhere. The stormy and dramatic mood of the first movement is temporarily relieved by the poetic second subject, which is played first by the piano alone. The recapitulation is highly irregular, by "classic" standards, and breaks off with a fanfare for trumpets and horns, which leads, via a recitative-like passage for piano, into the *Andante*. This is a charming and characteristic "song without words", sentimental, but not, to these ears, obnoxiously so. Another fanfare begins a presto section, which leads into the final *Molto Allegro e Vivace*. This last is a whirlwind technical

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display, more interesting for its brilliance than for its musical content.

Ani Dorfmann plays with sweeping bravura and considerable feeling, and she is ably supported by Mr. Goehr and the orchestra. The recording is quite satisfactory, except that passage work in the piano occasionally drowns out important thematic material in the other instruments.

—N. B.

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MOZART: *Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491*; played by Robert Casadesus and Paris Symphony Orchestra, direction Eugene Bigot (7 sides); and MOZART: *Rondo in D major, K. 485*; played by Robert Casadesus.

■ Mozart sounds dramatic depths at the beginning of this unusual work. There is genuine pathos in this music — the profoundly moved spirit of a master craftsman. Composed just prior to the *Nozze di Figaro* the concerto in no way augurs the latter score.

Fischer has given us a fine performance of this work in a recording that is full and rich and realistic (Victor set M-482). Here we have an equally fine performance and again vital recording. The two pianists have different approaches to this music, as is to be expected, considering their origins. Fischer, a Swiss by birth, is more Teutonic in his approach than Casadesus, who is a Frenchman through and through.

The dramatic qualities of the first movement and the later contrast of the material are more boldly and objectively set forth in Fischer's performance. Technically the Swiss pianist's performance is above reproach but his playing frequently takes on a percussive quality which is not what I imagine one might have heard in Mozart's day. Casadesus and Bigot do not strive to create as broad a canvas as Fischer and Collingwood do in the first movement, yet their performance in my estimation proves equally effective. The pianists and conductors in both cases prove congenial partners.

Casadesus's second movement is most sensitively played, in fact, his exquisite pianissimo and limpid legato — qualities that he always endeavors to impart to his students — are fully revealed here. I like the delicacy of his approach, and the quality of restraint in his playing which is fully preserved in the recording. Clearer and brighter, but less subtly shaded are the warmly glowing woodwind passages in the Fischer performance,

but there is more intimate beauty in the quality of the playing in the Casadesus set. Fischer takes the finale a shade faster than Casadesus and his playing of the third and fifth variations is broader, more dramatically outlined. (The performance in the Victor set is consistently fuller and outwardly bolder). But Casadesus brings other attributes to his performance and under his deft fingers the music sings with a natural and welcome elation. The cadenzas that he uses seems to me to fit the material better than those used by Fischer. Apparently their brevity contributes in part to the concerto's occupying seven sides here instead of eight as in the Victor set.

The *Rondo* on the last side owns an impressive quality — it is Mozart in a wholly carefree and buoyant mood. The pianist plays it delightfully.

From the reproductive side the concerto has been worthily handled; the essential intimacy conveyed by the soloist's style being fully maintained. There may be some shattering of the piano tone in a first playing but a steel needle should clear this up. The surfaces are good.

—P. H. R.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

BEETHOVEN: *String Trio in G major, Op. 9, No. 1*; played by Mara Sebrinsky, violin, Edward Neikrug, viola, and George Neikrug, cello. Musicraft Album No. 28, three discs, price \$5.

The three string trios, Op. 9, were published in 1798. Beethoven seems to have considered them the best things he had written up to that time. The *G major* reveals the same mastery of late 18th-century style as do the Opus 18 quartets; and in scope and details of construction the trio could well have served as a study for the quartets. The first movement—an Allegro con brio, preceded, as with Haydn, by a slow introduction—is planned on a large scale, for an early work; there are wide leaps in the individual parts, a complete independence of the voices, and an elaborate coda. This is followed by a fine Adagio, governed largely by triplets, a rather undistinguished Scherzo, and a final Presto noteworthy for its bold modulations. The three instruments are so skillfully handled throughout that one never feels any undesirable thinness of texture or the need of additional support.

The performers are members of the New Friends of Music Orchestra. They play with precision and a considerable variety of shading. The tone of the ensemble is attractive, if not of the utmost imaginable polish. The recording is first-rate. —N. B.

MOZART: *Divertimento in E flat*, K. 563, for violin, viola and cello; played by the Pasquier Trio. Columbia set 351, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ Immediately after his "Jupiter" Symphony, Mozart composed a trio in the form of a divertimento as an acknowledgement to his friend and benefactor Michael Puchberg. This wholly inspired composition, perfection itself, is quite up to the standard of the composer's last quartets and quintets. Here, in the intimacy of the string trio, it is remarkable what varied sound effects the composer has been able to create. The writing alternates between homophonic and contrapuntal styles.

It has been remarked that there is a solemn fervor in the mature works in the key of E flat by Mozart; that quality is noticeable here despite the generally joyous character of the music. As Rudolf Gerber says: "immediately the quaint *sotto voce* beginning draws forth — with the subtle *unisono* descent on the E flat triad into the comforting harmony of the dominant seventh — quietly shining happiness and that deep peace of the soul which in this purity and absorption Mozart alone was capable of representing. Beyond the first movement this is the keynote of the entire work, whereby the softness of the second theme or the shadowlike, enchanting flow of the development in the first movement are just as much a part of the total sphere of expression of the *sotto voce* beginning as the solemn *adagio* with its passionate accents, or the two minuets (especially the second with its ländler-like trio), and the light-winged final rondo which offers spiritual relaxation . . ."

The work is divided into six movements: an opening allegro, a slow movement, a first minuet, an *andante*, a second minuet and a final rondo. Skillful contrapuntal writing marks the first movement; the *adagio* is a reverie that expands — opening like a flower. The first minuet is florid in style. The *andante*, in variation form, is said to be based on a popular tune. The second minuet has an effective German country dance for its trio, and the finale — in free rondo form — is full of good humor and symmetrical grace.

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This concerto, a great favorite with Beethoven, is one of its composer's most impassioned and deeply felt piano concertos.

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MEYERBEER: Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25; Ania Dorfmann and London Symphony Orchestra, direction W. Goehr.

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Ania Dorfmann has recently appeared in America where critics hailed her for her splendid musicianship. Her performance of Mendelssohn's sparkling music is a joy!

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The musicianship of the three Pasquier brothers has never been more arrestingly revealed on records than it is here. They play this work with unerring taste, tonal suavity and technical ease. Their playing here ranks with the extraordinary musicianship that was recently revealed in the Victor recording of the Schubert *E flat Trio*.

The recording, originally emanating from the Pathé studios in Paris, achieves a fine unity and a welcome sense of intimacy requisite to true enjoyment of this music.

—P. H. R.

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SAINT-SAËNS: *Sonata No. 2, in F major*, for cello and piano — *Romanza* and *Scherzo*; played by Paul Bazelaire and Isidor Philipp. Columbia set X-119, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Saint-Saëns was an extremely talented musician, a proficient organist and a pianist and a gifted composer. Instrumental forms were "as playthings in his hand" but he did not by any means always endow them with true inspiration. His first sonata for cello and piano is a more imposing work than his second, and since the same artists have recorded it in its entirety, let us hope Columbia will repress it some time. Of the four movements in the second sonata, the *Scherzo* — which incidentally comes before the *Romanza* in the score, not as it is arranged here — and the *Romanza* are regarded as the best. Its finale is really quite weak and ineffectual.

Ever the master of the scherzo form, Saint-Saëns writes brilliantly and ingeniously here and the artists do notable justice to the music. This is a scherzo with variations, full of wit and scintillating vitality. The *Romanza* is quite another story; it is discursive. It aims for the lyric flow in long lines, but its inspiration is not too well sustained, its latter half being its best part. (The *Scherzo* can be procured separately on disc 69446D).

Isidor Philipp, the pianist, and noted pedagogue at the Paris Conservatory (incorrectly listed as J. Philipp on the label), was a pupil of Saint-Saëns. He is said to be a great admirer of the latter's music and has done much to keep the composer's name alive in his native France. Several years ago Mr. Philipp arranged with Pathé to record a series of Saint-Saëns's chamber works, and to date has performed the piano part in recordings of his first sonatas for violin and piano and for cello and piano besides the present movements from the second cello sonata.

M. Bazelaire is a well known French cellist, associated with Philipp at the Paris Conservatory. Together they do full justice to this music, and the recording and surfaces of these records are entirely satisfactory.

—P. G.

## KEYBOARD

MOMPOU: *Canto I Dansa IV*; ALBENIZ: *Tango*; and *Tango Espagnole*; played by George Copeland. Victor disc No. 15346, price \$2.00.

■ Mr. Copeland's reputation as an expert performer of Spanish piano music is sustained by his loving interpretations of these characteristic pieces. His singing tone, vital but unobtrusive rhythm, and colorful phrasing make these dances thoroughly enjoyable. The Albeniz *Tango* is the popular one in D, Op. 165, No. 2, and his *Tango Espagnole* is the second of *Deux Dances Espagnoles*, Op. 164. The recording is excellent.

—N. B.

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WAGNER-COURBOIN: *Evening Star* from *Tannhäuser*; and SCHUBERT-Courboin: *Serenade*, played by Charles M. Courboin on the Grand Court Organ, Wanamaker's, Philadelphia. Victor disc 1968, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

■ The series of recordings that M. Courboin made for Victor on the Grand Court Organ in Wanamaker's, Philadelphia, is highly unsatisfactory in our estimation. They are not too clear in tonal quality and the mechanical noise of the organ is disturbing. The present records offer no exception to the rule.

—P. G.

## GUITAR

PARGA: *Alhambra*; and TARREGA: *Capricho Arabe*; played by Julio Martinez Oyanguren, guitar. Columbia disc, No. 69457D, price \$1.50.

■ A good deal of melancholy interest attaches to Spanish music these days, and I suppose their timeliness will enhance the appeal of these two very characteristic selections. The first of them introduces to the phonograph a new composer, J. Parga, as to whose identity I must confess ignorance. His *Alhambra* is a little suite in the reasonably modern vein, into whose brief duration he has

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brought considerable variety and color. Tarrega's name, of course, is familiar through the various discs of Oyanguren and Segovia, and some collectors may know this *Capricho Arabe* in a recording made by a plectrum orchestra. Its mood is a doleful and nostalgic one. Mr. Oyanguren plays as brilliantly as ever, and the recording is up to the fine standard of his discs. —P. M.

## VIOLIN

PAGANINI: *Sonata XII in E minor*; and BURMESTER: *Serenade*; played by Ossy Renardy, violin, and Walter Robert, piano. Columbia 10-inch disc No. 17132-D, price \$1.00.

■ With a pleasing Schubert sonata, issued last month, to his credit, young Mr. Renardy now offers a pair of lightweight encore pieces. The Paganini "sonata", published as Op. 3, No. 6, is the last of twelve short works originally written for violin with guitar accompaniment. A simple Andante is followed by a folk-like Allegro, written partly in double notes. The playing is generally clean, and the tone good, though brief passages of left-hand *pizzicato* do not come off entirely successfully. The *Viennese Serenade* of Burmester could be blown away by a healthy baby's breath. The recording is satisfactory. —N. B.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Havanaise*, Opus 83; played by Jascha Heifetz and the London Symphony Orchestra, direction John Barbirolli. Victor disc 15347, price \$2.00.

Saint-Saëns' workmanship was almost always flawless; his *Havanaise*, founded of course upon the old Spanish song and dance-habanera—successfully represents his ability to handle rhythmic patterns. There is much of French confectionary in this work, but it also has variety which helps to maintain a listener's interest. The music is only mildly impassioned—hardly suggestive of the voluptuous and alluring movements of the original Spanish dance or its Cuban counterpart. Written in the composer's forty-second year, the *Havanaise* was published first for violin and piano. Undoubtedly it is more successful in the orchestral version. Heifetz plays this music with his customary suavity and technical finish, and Barbirolli and the London Symphony give him congenial support. Tonally the recording (originally issued in England a year and a half ago) is good with only an occasional surface blemish.

—P. G.

## VOCAL

EARLY CHORAL MUSIC; sung by the Trapp Choir. Victor set M-535, price \$7.50. (See article on page 393.)

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ARCHANGELSKY: *God, hear my prayer* (Psalm 55); LVOVSKY: *Requiem*; sung by the Don Cossack Choir, conducted by Serge Jaroff. Columbia disc, No. 7352-M, price \$1.50.

■ Here is a typical Don Cossack Choir performance, complete with falsettos and bullfrog basses. After a somewhat indeterminate opening in the Archangelsky *Psalm* the famous chorus hits its stride and produces a record to delight its admirers. The music is characteristic and attractive, as is also the massive and impressive *Requiem*. For a striking contrast, however, we have only to turn to Victor's recent release by the Choir of the Russian Church in Paris (who, incidentally, have also recorded this Archangelsky *Psalm*). Compared with the singing of that fine organization the more brilliant virtuoso performance of the Don Cossacks seems peculiarly cool and calculated. The recording here is apparently not particularly new, for it lacks something in clarity, and suffers from an echo. The surfaces are good.

BIZET: *Carmen-Habanera* and *Chanson Bohème*; sung by Ninon Vallin, soprano, with chorus and orchestra directed by G. Andolfi. Columbia disc, No. P-9152-M, price \$1.50.

■ Good electrical recordings of the *Carmen* music are none too plentiful. Every new release, therefore, carries hope as well as interest — and oftener than not disappointment. This time we know pretty well what to expect, for Ninon Vallin rarely makes a poor record, though on the other hand she has not the vivid personality to be a great *Carmen*. I suppose that we will have to wait for another Calvé to record the perfect *Habanera*, and that in the meantime we will be faced with a choice between temperament and vocalism. For the former, so far as I know, the best offering is the early one by Marguerite D'Alvarez, for all the lady's shortcomings in intonation, and for the latter I doubt if Ninon Vallin's will be bettered. Bruna Castagna, if she records the song, may

strike somewhere in the middle, but that is pure speculation.

There is more real life in Vallin's *Chanson Bohème*, largely because the conductor, Godfrey Andolfi, whips up the time excitingly. With the above reservations I have no hesitation in recommending the record.

...

BRAHMS: *Deutsche Volkslieder: Ach lieber Herr Jesu Christ; In stiller Nacht*; VICTORIA: *O vos omnes*; sung by The Madrigal Singers under the direction of Lehman Engel. Columbia disc, No. 9150-M, price \$1.50.

■ Glancing over the list of recordings made by Lehman Engel's Madrigal Singers, one cannot fail to be impressed by the catholic taste of the director. Unfortunately, however, the choir's style has not been as broad as its leader's intentions, and the same unpleasant mannerisms are to be found in every thing they do, from American tidbits to the *Missa Brevis* of Palestrina. These mannerisms are present, too, in this latest disc which in itself presents a strong musical contrast.

The first of the two Brahms folksong arrangements is here recorded for the first time. It is the simplest sort of chorale melody, demanding simple and modest treatment. The singers' habit of chopping phrases is particularly inappropriate here. *In stiller Nacht*, one of the loveliest of German melodies, has been recorded in Brahms' solo version by Gerhardt (HMV DA 770) and several times by various German choruses. Again a smoother and more penetrating performance would be far more effective than that presented by the Madrigal Singers.

The Victoria motet is new to the American catalogue. It receives on the whole a better performance than the folksongs. Victoria is considered by some to have been the superior of Palestrina, because of the searchingly human quality of his music. The singing here is smoother than in the Brahms, though the singers' understanding of the meaning of the music is quite superficial. The recording is good.

...

BURLEIGH (Arr.): *Were You There?*; and HAYES (Arr.): *I Can't Stay Away*; sung by Marian Anderson, contralto, with piano accompaniment by Kosti Vehanen. Ten-inch Victor disc, No. 1966, price \$1.50.

■ For all her great success in other types of music, Marian Anderson has not lost her racial feeling, and she remains one of the most

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satisfactory singers of spirituals. It may very well be true that concert arrangements of these songs are something of a perversion, but given a voice like this one and an expression so deep and sincere, they have a wonderful power to move us. *Were You There?* is one of the simplest, and therefore one of the strongest of the spirituals. The Burleigh accompaniment, while rich and colorful, is not overelaborate, and the ponderous meaning of the text can hardly fail of its effect. *I Can't Stay Away*, in Roland Hayes' arrangement, is more typical and more rhythmically spirited. Its melody is a hard one to forget. Miss Anderson has never sounded better on records, although the surfaces of this disc are inclined to be noisy.

• •

MARTINI: *Plaisir d'amour*; and MEHUL: *Ariodant — Romance du Barde: Femme sensible*; sung by Andre Baugé, baritone, with harp accompaniment in the former by Mme. Cariven, and orchestra in the latter directed by G. Andolfi. Columbia disc, No. P. 9155-M, price \$1.50.

■ This record, from the Pathé studios in France, has been much admired abroad, and its release in this country, though somewhat belated, is a most welcome one. Baugé has a firm and pleasing baritone voice, splendid diction and a genuine sense of style. His *Plaisir d'amour* is, so far as I know, the most legitimately musical one among modern recordings, although I confess to a strong affection for that of Yvonne Printemps, who sings it more after the manner of a diseuse (HMV DB 1625). Part of that affection rightly belongs to the harpsichord accompaniment, which seems to me preferable to the harp of the present recording, with its occasional blurring. My one criticism of Baugé is a tendency to sing slightly below the note, though he compensates for this by his various obvious virtues.

In the Méhul selection his intonation is above reproach, and consequently his performance leaves nothing to be desired. Although this little serenade from one of the operas of Gluck's celebrated pupil is quite a famous one, it is not really familiar in this country, and has never before, I believe, appeared in the domestic record catalogues. Its melody is simple and irresistible, with a delicate accompaniment dominated by the harp. The text is on an old familiar theme: the lady is urged to take her happiness in its season. M. Baugé's singing is as unpretentiously straightforward and musical as it should be. The recording on both sides is excellent, and the surfaces are satisfactory.

MARTINI: *Plaisir d'amour*; and COTTRAU: *Santa Lucia*; sung by Beniamino Gigli, tenor, in the former with members of La Scala Orchestra, directed by D'no Olivieri, and in the latter with orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. Victor disc, No. 15348, price \$2.00.

■ Although Martini's *Plaisir d'amour* has hardly lacked recordings, it appears twice on this month's lists, and the two new versions make a striking contrast. Mr. Gigli's is surely the more personal of the two, and will appeal to the tenor's own following, while those to whom the song means more than the artist will almost certainly turn to the Columbia disc of Andre Baugé. The Gigli performance is for him a very restrained one, and tonally it seems to prove once again that in the matters of sheer vocal endowment and naturally free production this tenor has today few rivals and no superiors. If his artistry were as simple and as natural as his physical singing, he would indeed be a great artist. Unhappily, however, he shows little feeling for phrasing, indulges in emotionalism of the most obvious sort, and sings in a French which is too definitely that of an Italian.

In *Santa Lucia*, of course, he is more at home, although here his singing is unquestionably the most mannered I have ever heard. Every attack is anticipated, and wherever humanly possible the changes are rung on portamento. The second verse is very subdued, the better to emphasize the exaggerated expansiveness of the third, in which the singer hurls all reserve to the four winds and tears the simple melody to shreds. But perhaps it is wrong to criticize these things, since Mr. Gigli's admirers expect them of him.

The recording and the playing of the two accompanying orchestras are first-rate, and the surfaces could hardly be better.

• •

PUCCINI: *Tosca—Recondita armonia; Tosca —E lucevan le stelle*; sung by Galliano Masini, tenor, with orchestra. Ten-inch Columbia disc, No. 4221-M, price \$1.00.

■ One of the two tenor sensations of the current Metropolitan season adds another recording to his list. The selections are familiar enough in all conscience, and they provide the curious with the opportunity of comparing Masini's interpretations with those of nearly every tenor since the earliest days of recording whose province has been the Italian repertoire. More than that, they bring him into direct comparison with the other new tenor, Jussi Björling, who has recorded them

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for Victor. In fairness it should be said that Bjoerling has had the more recent and better recording of the two, and that this disc does not, perhaps, represent adequately the Masini of today. The voice, as it emerges here, is an uncommonly good one, without that personal touch which might have made it great. The style of the singer is characteristically Italian and uninhibited. *Recondita armonia*, to be sure, is commendably restrained until the final note, but in *E lucevan le stelle* he throws reserve to the winds, and with it the vocal line. There undoubtedly are some listeners who will prefer this to the cleaner singing of the Nordic Bjoerling. As hinted above the Masini recording shows its age, the more so because of the obviously studio orchestra. The reproduction is smooth enough.

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RUSSIAN POPULAR SONGS: *Vagabond* (Song of the Siberian Prisoners); *Stenka Rasin*; *Song of the Volga Boatmen* (*Ei Euch-nem*); *Dubinushka*; sung by C. Joukovitch, basso, with chorus and Balalaika Orchestra Scriabine. Two ten-inch Columbia discs, Nos. P-406M-407M, price 75c each.

■ These two little discs present four well-known Russian folk songs in the sort of arrangements we might hear in a Russian restaurant or club. They are done in a spirit similar to that of Chaliapin's *Black Eyes*, reviewed last month. The performances here are lusty and not too polished, with the big and hearty Russian bass voice of M. Joukovitch in the lead. He has neither the vocal nor the dramatic greatness of Chaliapin, but like most of his countrymen he seems to have studied that singer's style in this kind of music. In the familiar *Song of the Volga Boatmen* he even uses an elaboration of the Chaliapin-Koenemann arrangement. The other selections are a prison song, called *Vagabond*, the great labor song *Dubinushka*, and *Stenka Rasin*, the ballad of a Cossack hero who sacrificed his sweetheart to the Volga. All of the performances are notable for their spirit, and the reproduction is smooth and lifelike.

• •

SCHUBERT: *Wehmut*, Op. 22, No. 2; *Seligkeit*; sung by Hertha Glatz, contralto, with piano accompaniment by Franz Rupp. Ten inch Victor disc, No. 1949, price \$1.50.

■ In connection with Miss Glatz's debut record recently I expressed the hope that we would hear her in some less familiar lieder than the two with which she introduced herself. Here is a half-fulfillment of that wish:

one song that I have never heard before, and one which quite definitely did not need another recording.

*Wehmut* is set to a poem of Matthias von Collin. It is one of those brief but meaty songs which we find sprinkled through the seven volumes of Schubert's lieder, and one well worth rescuing from oblivion. The text would be a difficult one to translate effectively — it is a characteristically German mood: as the poet wanders through the woods and the fields in the spring, melancholy comes over him and all the beauty vanishes. I cannot honestly say that Miss Glatz probes the depths of its sentiment, but she does a good clean job, and she deserves our thanks for finding the song.

*Seligkeit*, however, is something else. Victor already has it twice on the lists, and sung by such artists as Mmes. Schumann and Ginstler. Furthermore it is the kind of song specifically suited for just such voices as theirs, and each of them does it full justice. The Glatz voice is naturally less ideal, and she weighs the song down by an attempt to make it sound more consequential than it is. Mr. Rupp, on the other hand, succeeds in adding a new touch to the interludes without departing from either the notes or the spirit of the song.

On the whole the voice sounds less impressive in this than in the previous disc, but the balance with the piano maintains here the new standard set in American lieder recordings.

• •

STRAUSS: *Seitdem dein Aug'*, Op. 17, No. 1; and *Cäcilie*, Op. 27, No. 2; sung by Kirsten Flagstad, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Edwin McArthur. Ten-inch Victor disc, No. 1967, price \$1.50.

■ Recording artists have as yet by no means exhausted the repertoire of Strauss lieder, and so we may be grateful for the occasional appearance of such little-known songs as *Seitdem dein Aug'*. It is written in the composer's simpler style, as befits its elevated sentiment. The text, by A. F. von Schack, is a reminiscence of the first glance exchanged by two lovers. Mme. Flagstad's singing matches the simplicity of the song, and her voice as recorded in it is limpid and lovely, if not reproduced quite to the life. Aside from the matter of diction — which, while perfectly correct, could be pointed up a bit — her treatment of this song is very satisfying.

As for the frequently recorded *Cäcilie*, perhaps it is enough to say that this singer has not succeeded in eclipsing the more notable

of her predecessors. The now rather old disc by Rosetta Anday still seems to me to have more life, while that of Julius Patzak is perhaps even better. I do not hold with the late David Bispham that any woman who sings this song is "nothing better than a hussy," but I do prefer it in a man's voice. However, all other considerations aside, the Flagstad voice sounds rather thin in this song, especially in the upper register. This is quite possibly due to brittle recording. The surfaces on this disc are quiet.

• • •

STRAUSS-TIOMKIN: *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (2 sides), and *One Day When We Were Young*; and *There Will Come a Time*, (from M-G-M film "The Great Waltz"); sung by Miliza Korjus, soprano, with M-G-M Orchestra, conducted by Nat W. Finston, and violin obbligato by Toscha Seidel. Two ten-inch Victor discs, Nos. 4410-4411, price \$1.00 each.

■ *The Great Waltz* introduces Miliza Korjus to American moviegoers, and I suppose collectors of her records are going to the picture, as I did, to see what sort of impression she makes. We certainly don't go to it for the sake of Johann Strauss, whose music comes off rather badly in the whole affair — what with a little bit here and a little bit there, all very fragmentary and not very Straussian. These records are a fair sample of both the musical treatment and the prima donna. The birdlike joyousness which has been a feature of her European recordings is altogether missing here. She coos softly in generally good and careful (though not too distinct) English, and she releases, when occasion demands, a flood of flashy coloratura or a not quite perfect high note. The very sugary violin obbligato of Toscha Seidel adds just the touch that gluttons for this sort of thing will want, and the orchestra is well in this very American picture of old Vienna. The recording, however, is none too clear; the singer's voice was easier and freer on the screen. Perhaps Miss Korjus is embarrassed by the newness of singing in our language, Hollywood recording technique, or perhaps it is going to prove a major tragedy that Hollywood got her before the Metropolitan.

• • •

SULLIVAN: *Patience* — *Selections from Act 2: The Magnet and the Churn; When I Go Out of Door; Finale; Iolanthe* — *March of the Peers*; sung by the Harvard Glee Club with piano accompaniment, directed by G. W. Woodworth. Victor disc 12550, \$1.50.

■ I don't know how strong a faction of musical purists exists among Savoyards, and therefore cannot predict what sort of reception this disc will receive from those who have no young relatives at Harvard. This Gilbert and Sullivan is done in the old fashioned glee club tradition — not at all in the manner of the theatre. The *March of the Peers*, to be sure, undergoes little arranging, although those who buy the disc for the music may quite possibly feel cheated by the piano accompaniment (the label does not say so, but there is obviously more than one piano). The *Patience* excerpts, however, consist of a solo, a duet and a trio, all arranged for male chorus. It may seem a little surprising that this should come from Harvard, where the movement toward more serious glee club programs originated, but it seems plain enough that the boys enjoyed the change.

Judged simply on its own merits the performances are superb. There is great spirit and gusto in the *Iolanthe* selection, and marvelously clean singing in the *Patience* music. The diction of the chorus is much above the average, although — not very surprisingly — the few people in the world who do not know some of the words will probably not get them from this disc. The recording was evidently done in a hall, which fact must have added to this problem, as well as to the echo difficulty. The surfaces on both sides are smooth.

—P. M.

• • •

HUMPERDINCK: *Hänsel und Gretel* — *Abend-segen*; both voices sung by Elisabeth Schumann, and *Folk Lied* and *Lied des Sandmannchens*; sung by Elisabeth Schumann. Both with piano accompaniment by Ernest Lush. Victor disc 1948, 10-inch, \$1.50.

■ Mme. Schumann seems to regard this disc quite highly even though it hardly represents her artistry at its best, but instead is merely a stunt recording. Admirers of this singer will be disappointed, we believe, with the duet side of this disc because the singer's voice is not good on the low side; as a matter of fact her Hänsel seems rather timid and uncertain and not a little husky. Naturally the other side of the disc represents the artist

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to better advantage, but the absence of an orchestral accompaniment is rather distressing. As a stunt recording there is much to say for the one side, and the singer shows her marked musical gifts in her ability to time the two voices, sung separately of course.

• • •

TAHITI SONGS: *Ute-Upa-Upa* (Typical Song) and *Maruru-Patau* (Old Song); performed by Les "Tamaru Tahiti". Columbia disc P396-M, 10-inch, price 75 cents.

TAHITI SONGS: *Parari-Parara'a* (Typical Song), *Tau Tiare Iti* (Tahitian Melody); performed by same group. Columbia disc P397, price 75 cents.

■ The white man went to the South Sea Islands and introduced the guitar and the accordion and the natives adopted them as their own. These are highly interesting melodies, by turns gay and nostalgic. Although they possess some characteristics in common with Hawaiian music, we feel that these songs are more vital and more authentic than most of the Hawaiian material we have heard on records. They are well sung, the natives all possessing agreeable and sonorous voices, and they are accompanied by the instruments named.

P. G.

### Templeton's Second Album

ALEC TEMPLETON IN A COLLECTION OF HIS OWN COMPOSITIONS. Four 10-inch discs in album, price \$5.00. Available from the Gramophone Shop.

■ Here we have the talented Mr. Templeton in a recital of his own works. The selections include *The Topsy Turvy Suite* — (1) *Bach Goes to Town*, (2) *Soldier's Minuet*, (3) *Undertaker's Toccata*; *Ghost Rhapsody*, piano solo; *Longing*, a song; *Pines*, a piano solo; *Voyage à la lune*, a French song; and *Mother's Lullaby*, a piano solo, with *Friendship*, a "coda setting of a sentiment by Dinah Muloch."

The fugue of *Bach Goes to Town* is fairly well known in its orchestral version; the prelude that precedes it is perhaps less well known. One can hardly agree that Templeton has "synthesized the best elements of counterpoint and swing" but it must be said he has made an effective try at it. *Soldier's Minuet* and *Undertaker's Holiday* are good fun; it may be sacrilege but we feel their performance could be bettered. *Ghost Rhapsody* and *Pines*, believe it or not, have the Debussy touch, in fact the former is very well named, for Mr. Debussy's ghost is much in

evidence. *Longing* is a sentimental song, which we are told many people like. Mr. Templeton does not sing it too well. But his little French song, about the boy who dreams of climbing to the moon, is a delightful little chanson, which the composer renders more in the manner of the raconteur than in that of the finished singer. *Mother's Lullaby* is a piano piece that the composer wrote as a child on an air his mother used to sing to him.

Mr. Templeton is unquestionably a phenomenally gifted person, and his efforts here are not by any means negligible, but Mr. Templeton as improviser and satirist is by far the more interesting and talented personality.

—P. H. R.

### Piano and Orchestra

LISZT: *Todtentanz (Dance of Death)* — A Paraphrase of the "Dies Irae" for piano and orchestra; played by Edward Kilenyi and Paris Symphony Orchestra, direction Selmar Meyrowitz. Columbia set X-122, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Sanroma and the Boston "Pops" Orchestra recorded a vital performance of this work over a year ago. Since then we have played it perhaps twice. The urge to return often to this music does not seem to exist. Perhaps the macabre quality of the work may appeal to some, and the technical display of the piano may induce some excitement, but as a piece of music, the *Dance of Death*, has, in my estimation, very little of permanent value to offer.

That sturdy old plainsong sequence the *Dies Irae* (part of the *Mass of the Dead* in the Roman Missal) is subjected to some violent treatment here. The work is a virtuoso's holiday. Perhaps as much as any composition by its composer it drives home how prodigious Liszt's technical accomplishments must have been. Liszt might well have claimed, à la Tartini, that he had a dream in which Death (instead of the Devil) appeared and displayed his musical prowess. The actual facts are almost as fantastic, for a sinister and foreboding fresco in Pisa, known as *The Triumph of Death*, was the inspiration for this work. Death has assumed many fantastic shapes in art, but Liszt's characterization here of that Prince of Peace (a woman in the fresco) is surely a tortured and twisted one. One wonders what Liszt the Abbé later thought of this youthful effusion!

The performance of Edward Kilenyi (who incidentally never used his first name pro-

(Continued on Page 422)

## The New Mozart Opera Society Release

MOZART: *Die Zauberflöte*, Opera in two acts, sung in German by Famous European Artists, with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor sets M-541 (Act 1), 9 discs, price \$13.50. and M-542 (Act 2), 19 sides, price \$14.25.

■ Opera, especially Mozartian opera, requires good voices and a balanced ensemble. Here in this recording we have fine examples of both. No other recorded opera, in my estimation, has had the advantage that this set enjoys.

I say this from experience, for it has been my good fortune to hear practically the same cast in person, and all of the participants in the same roles in the not too distant past. Therefore the issuance of this set is to me like meeting old friends.

My first attendance at a major *Magic Flute* performance was in Salzburg on August 31, 1937. Great was my expectation for Kipnis was singing Sarastro, and Toscanini was conducting. As it was the last performance of the season and all the artists had had ample time to work into their roles, for which they had been hand picked, I naturally thought the performance would be a memorable one. It did not take long for me to realize once that performance began, that a noted basso and a great conductor did not necessarily mean a great performance, even though they were ably supported by Fassbaender as Papagano and Roswaenge as Tamino. Also, the distaff side was a great disappointment. The only two roles that had adequate interpreters were those of the first and third ladies, sung respectively by Hilde Konetzni and Kerstin Thorborg. The less said about the other ladies the better. Local critics said that this was the best performance of the season. To me it was less than adequate. The ensemble was poor and the solo parts of the women were not even adequately sung.

On June 16, 1938, at Covent Garden, I found myself not without some misgivings about another performance of *The Magic Flute*, for here again were a renowned conductor and a hand picked cast. And it too was a last performance of the season!

The cast I heard that night was with few exceptions the same as the participants in the present recording. On this occasion Julius



Tiana Lemnitz

Patzak sang Tamino, Sir Thomas Beecham conducted the London Philharmonic and the Deutsches Opernhaus loaned the famous Schinkel scenery. The performance was a revelation! The ensemble and solo work were so good that a leading critic wrote that if Londoners ever heard a performance with more merits than this they might count themselves incredibly lucky. He was right and now we have on records a preservation of a masterwork.

The leading roles are allotted as follows:

Sarastro .....	Wilhelm Strienz
Tamino .....	Helge Roswaenge
Papageno .....	Gerhard Hüsch
Queen of the Night .....	Erna Berger
Pamina .....	Tiana Lemnitz
Papagena .....	Irma Beilke
Sprecher .....	Walter Grossmann
Monostatos .....	Heinrich Tessmer

The conductor is Sir Thomas Beecham, the orchestra the Berlin Philharmonic, the chorus the Favres Soloisten Vereinigung, and the recording was made in the Beethoven Saal in Berlin. The score is reproduced complete except for the spoken dialogue.

Of the principals, Roswaenge as Tamino makes the first appearance. He unfortunately does not maintain the uniformly high vocal standard of the balance of the cast, but despite a tendency toward hardness in his upper tones (which seems to be present in almost all German tenors), he sings with style. It

is a great pity that Patzak was not chosen for the recording, for a finer and better schooled Tamino it would be hard to find.

Hüsch, known to most of us as a lieder singer, is a well-known and greatly admired operatic artist in Europe. His treatment of the role of Papageno has just the right amount of comic element. He is careful to maintain a finely modeled vocal line, and his interpretation of this role is always in good taste and should not be missed by any who admire fine singing.

Strienz is a young basso of unusual talent and great promise. Undoubtedly owing to his youth, he has not made the role of Sarastro as flawless as it might be. One suspects that his voice has not fully rounded out as yet, although it must be said his singing is always that of the finished musician.

Berger, as Queen of The Night, is the most successful interpreter of this difficult role we have today. Her voice is still fresh and not overworked and her intelligence makes her one of the best coloraturas of today. She sings *Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren* for its dramatic worth—the song of a heartbroken mother, and invests *Der hölle Rache* with the proper amount of hatred. Hers is true coloratura singing here—not singing manipulated by “control knobs” as is the case of another lady who records.

The last artist to be spoken of is Tiana Lemnitz. She has a lyric soprano voice of remarkable beauty, which she uses with rare skill. Her Pamina, in my estimation, is one of the truly great portraits on the contemporary operatic stage. She embodies this part with a spiritual grace and she sings the music so beautifully that the listener is carried to the heights. Her duet with Hüsch in the first act and her exquisite singing of *Ach, ich fühl's* show what a sterling artist she is. At the conclusion of her singing of *Ach, ich fühl's*, at Covent Garden, there was hardly a dry eye in the house — surely the supreme test of a great artist.

The balance between the orchestra and the soloists is a model, in my estimation, for all future gramophone operas.

As for Sir Thomas Beecham, I concur with the English critics who seem to have been generally agreed that no better choice of director was possible.

The recording is fully worthy of the performance, and the surfaces on the first volume—which was the only one issued so far for review—are relatively smooth. No book-



Erna Berger

let was included with the review set, but it is to be hoped that the excellent booklet which the writer obtained with the HMV pressings of this opera in London will be issued here. This is, after all, a Society Issue and an important one too.

—George C. Leslie.

## Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

■ THE FIRST ALL-ELLINGTON CONCERT, GIVEN IN THE Great Hall at City College on January 3, was such a success that requests began to pour in from all angles from disappointed would-be listeners who had been turned away because of lack of space or tickets. To satisfy these demands a repeat performance has been arranged. This will take place in Carnegie Hall on April 12. Because of its impromptu nature, its limited purpose, and its location, the first concert failed to receive the notice or attention it deserved. Only Harlem initiates and Ellington's most devoted followers knew of it soon enough to attend. The musical press passed it by. There will be no such excuse this time. The contract is signed, the time and place are fixed, the advertising will begin immediately, and the tickets will be placed on sale about a month before the concert. Ellington has moved down from Harlem and out of the night club to the very center of New York's music world. The long-hairs and the “serious” music critics will have their chance to evaluate the music of Ellington —

the man whose followers claim is writing the most vital American music today.

The Carnegie Hall concert will be a repeat concert only in that it will mark the second American appearance of Ellington and his men on a concert stage. The original concert will not be repeated item for item. It will be better planned and better prepared. At present it is known that Otto Cessana's *Swing Symphony* will be played. This work, which has been acclaimed by some as an outstanding contribution to American music, will be the only non-Ellington item. For this concert Ellington is preparing a review of his early works which have been pushed aside into partial obscurity by the popularity of some of his later pieces. This feature of the program presents an unusually difficult problem for Ellington to solve. Many of the works were spontaneous creations which originated at white heat in the recording studio and which exist in no other form than on records. Orchestrations will have to be prepared from discs, and since many have been discontinued for years, the generosity of collectors will have to be relied upon to supply the missing items. A significant piece of news! The phonograph once again will prove its value as a preserver of work which might otherwise have been forgotten forever.

Another important feature of the Carnegie Hall concert will be the inclusion of several excerpts from Ellington's opera. This was promised at the first concert but because of lack of time to prepare them properly, the numbers were struck off the program. This time they will definitely be presented. The artist who will sing them has not yet been chosen. Neither Ivie Anderson nor any of the men in the band is vocally equipped for the purpose.

It has been known that Ellington was working on the opera for many years, but not one note has ever been heard by anyone outside his band. Not even the title is known. All that can be gleaned from various sources is that the subject of the opera is the American Negro: his origin in the African jungle, his transplantation as slave to our South, his development and the development of his music, the birth of jazz and its growth to the present day. From these meager hints it would seem to be a musical pageant rather than an opera but the thought of it is exciting.

An outstanding feature of this concert will be the program notes. They will be written or edited by Leopold Stokowski, who has been an enthusiast for Ellington's works for many years.

All in all, this second Ellington concert promises to be one of the most exciting and interesting events of the 1939 musical season.

While we are on the subject of Duke we want to mark one of his most recent records for special honors. It is *Blue Light* on Brunswick 8297. Here is Duke at his best. *Blue Light* is a product of that same rich vein which produced such masterpieces as *Mood Indigo*, *Black and Tan*, *Creole Love Call*, and *Auf! Sad!*. It is the real Duke. It is recommended to all — but especially to those who are not yet convinced that Duke Ellington is a great American composer.

Count Basie and his men have definitely gone over to American Record. This is one of the indirect consequences of the Columbia Broadcasting Company's acquisition of Columbia Records. When we learned that C. B. S. had retained John Hammond as advisor it didn't take a crystal ball to predict that Basie would soon be a Columbia headliner.

The last disc Basie made for Decca before leaving was *Cherokee* and *Five at Five*. At this date Chu

Berry substituted for Hershel Evans, who was then seriously ill. It is our sad duty to report that Evans' fine tenor playing will never be heard again with Basie or any other band. He died on February 8th as a result of his illness.

A new series of jam sessions is now in full swing at the Park Lane Hotel, Park Avenue at 48th Street. Every Friday evening from five to eight the Society of American Musicians presents a Cocktail Concert, which is just a swanky way of saying jam session. The subscription is one dollar and for that dollar one gets two solid hours of good swing played by the best musicians within reach. The affair has its element of surprise in that one never knows just who will be playing on any given night.

Bud Freeman's band is now completed but news of its personnel is still being withheld until Bud finds a spot in which to open. The Onyx Club has made a bid for him but Bud is holding out because the Onyx wants to feature three bands at once — Kirby's, the Spirits of Rhythm, and Bud's — with a proportionate reduction in the wage scale for all three groups. Nothing has come of negotiations up to now.

There are now three boogie woogie pianists at Cafe Society: Pete Johnson has joined Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. Incidentally, their set of Vocalion records has proved a success. These discs present genuine examples of a typical Negro art.

Because of the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph distributed throughout the country in every saloon, road-house, or ice-cream parlor the recording companies are having copyright troubles. It seems that composers of popular hits refuse to have their numbers plugged to death in a short time without an adequate financial return. Hence the comparative scarcity of new hits on records and the unprecedented revival of old timers in new arrangements — by all bands, sweet or hot. The old numbers have no copyright restrictions and clever arrangers can make good swing out of anything. Examine your latest popular release list and see if it does not bear out this new situation.

The newest releases of the Hot Record Society are *King Joe* by Jimmie Noone's Apex Club Orchestra and *Isn't There a Little Love* by Joe "Wingy" Mannone and His Club Royale Orchestra (H. R. S. No. 13); and *Give Me Your Telephone Number* and *Higginbotham Blues*, both by J. C. Higginbotham and His Six Hicks (H. R. S. No. 14). All four sides are repressings of records long out of print and for many years prized items in hot jazz collectors' libraries because they represent the finest of their kind and the finest examples by these particular groups. Opera had its golden age and so did jazz — somewhere around 1926. *King Joe* is a repressing of one side of Vocalion 1229 (what happened to *Monday Date* on the reverse?) and *Isn't There a Little Love* of Vocalion 15797 (its backing has already appeared on H. R. S. No. 3). Both sides of the Higginbotham disc are repressings of Okeh 8772. Those who missed the originals are urged to get these repressings (on up-to-date, noiseless material). Those who are already familiar with the records have probably worn out their originals by now so they will need no urging.

We are happy to report that Hugues Panassie is fully recovered from his serious illness. He sailed for home on February 23rd and before long we shall be reading his impressions of America, American jazz, and American musicians in his articles for the magazine *Le Jazz Hot*. He has taken home with him a wealth of material which no doubt will someday appear in a new book he plans to write. *Au revoir!*

# In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

## Standard Popular

AAAA—*Never Again*, and *I'm So Weary of It All*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26148.

■ However brilliant Noel Coward's success as a playwright during the past decade, it is quite likely that he will be remembered fifty years from now (if at all) by his popular songs rather than his plays. Fashions in plays change with a terrifying rapidity, but a good tune is more or less impervious to changes of style and Coward has written his share of delightful melodies. We do not for a moment claim that either of these from his current New York production, *Set to Music*, will still be clogging the ether waves in 1990, but they are substantially superior to most of the contemporary ditties and Dorsey does nicely indeed with both of them. *I'm So Weary of It All*, while not destined to achieve the commercial success of *Never Again*, is, we believe, the more appealing tune of the pair and does not suffer in the least from being sung "with a straight face" by Jack Leonard, rather than in the highly and riotously satirical manner that Beatrice Lillie employs with the number in the show.

AAAA—*My Heart Belongs to Daddy*, and *Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love*. Mary Martin with Eddie Duchin and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8282.

One of those meteoric successes that can only occur in the show business has been that of Mary Martin, Texas songstress, in the musical, *Leave It to Me*. One may be pardoned for wondering just a wee bit what all the shouting's for. In other words, it doesn't seem that anyone could possibly be quite that good. Her first recording here, of two numbers from the show, reveals a highly ingratiating style and a soprano voice of reasonably appealing quality, but we still think that her press agent should receive the bulk of the credit for her extremely rapid ascent to fame and fortune.

*Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love*, while not even sung by Miss Martin in the show, has a homely, philosophical content that she projects as well as Sophie Tucker, for whom it was written, and the other side is, of course,

the tune on which she has been riding to the heights. Duchin provides satisfactory backgrounds.

AAA—*Stately Homes of England*, and *Mad About the Boy*. Victor 26147.

*Stately Homes of England* is one of the wittiest lyrics ever penned by Noel Coward and this is covering quite a bit of territory. Its highly polished demolition of down-at-the-heels English aristocracy is the sort of thing that practically never occurs in an American musical show (Lorenz Hart has approached this vein on one or two occasions) and its inclusion in the score of *Set to Music* is a welcome note in the occasionally cloying quality of Coward's purely sentimental efforts. Sung here by Messrs. French, Landon, Gattrell and Carten, the quartet that does it in the show, it is backed up by the old Noble recording of *Mad About the Boy*, which has also been revived for the show.

AAA—I *Get Along Without You Very Well*, and *A Kiss for Consolation*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26151.

One of the season's more highly publicized numbers is Hoagy Carmichael's *I Get Along Without You Very Well*. It appears that Hoagy, in rummaging through some old papers in the attic one rainy afternoon, ran on to the lyric and was instantly inspired to make a popular song of it, despite the fact that he had no idea who the author of the poem, so called, might be. After an announcement of his predicament by a gossip columnist on the air, Hoagy has received communications from several thousand claimants to its authorship, although none of them has yet proved to be authentic. Or so the story goes. It is, as a matter of fact, a tear-jerker of considerably more than average merit and will be likely to maintain Carmichael's excellent record for the past year or more. Clinton's performance is good, with Bea Wain's vocal, appropriately morose, of course, an attractive feature.

AAA—*It's All Yours*, and *This Is It*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26149.

Two vigorous numbers from the current Arthur Schwartz musical, *Stars In Your Eyes*, manfully performed by the Dorsey crew. Neither one possesses any outstanding quality in particular but both have the vague aura of "class" which is generally the hallmark of a first-rate writer. Intelligent, comprehensible lyrics (Dorothy Fields in this case) and genuine musicianship probably have a good deal to do with it.

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New York, N. Y.

Henry S. Gerstl.







display, more interesting for its brilliance than for its musical content.

Ani Dorfmann plays with sweeping bravura and considerable feeling, and she is ably supported by Mr. Goehr and the orchestra. The recording is quite satisfactory, except that passage work in the piano occasionally drowns out important thematic material in the other instruments.

—N. B.

• • •

MOZART: *Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491*; played by Robert Casadesus and Paris Symphony Orchestra, direction Eugene Bigot (7 sides); and MOZART: *Rondo in D major, K. 485*; played by Robert Casadesus.

■ Mozart sounds dramatic depths at the beginning of this unusual work. There is genuine pathos in this music — the profoundly moved spirit of a master craftsman. Composed just prior to the *Nozze di Figaro* the concerto in no way augurs the latter score.

Fischer has given us a fine performance of this work in a recording that is full and rich and realistic (Victor set M-482). Here we have an equally fine performance and again vital recording. The two pianists have different approaches to this music, as is to be expected, considering their origins. Fischer, a Swiss by birth, is more Teutonic in his approach than Casadesus, who is a Frenchman through and through.

The dramatic qualities of the first movement and the later contrast of the material are more boldly and objectively set forth in Fischer's performance. Technically the Swiss pianist's performance is above reproach but his playing frequently takes on a percussive quality which is not what I imagine one might have heard in Mozart's day. Casadesus and Bigot do not strive to create as broad a canvas as Fischer and Collingwood do in the first movement, yet their performance in my estimation proves equally effective. The pianists and conductors in both cases prove congenial partners.

Casadesus's second movement is most sensitively played, in fact, his exquisite pianissimo and limpid legato — qualities that he always endeavors to impart to his students — are fully revealed here. I like the delicacy of his approach, and the quality of restraint in his playing which is fully preserved in the recording. Clearer and brighter, but less subtly shaded are the warmly glowing woodwind passages in the Fischer performance,

but there is more intimate beauty in the quality of the playing in the Casadesus set. Fischer takes the finale a shade faster than Casadesus and his playing of the third and fifth variations is broader, more dramatically outlined. (The performance in the Victor set is consistently fuller and outwardly bolder). But Casadesus brings other attributes to his performance and under his deft fingers the music sings with a natural and welcome elation. The cadenzas that he uses seems to me to fit the material better than those used by Fischer. Apparently their brevity contributes in part to the concerto's occupying seven sides here instead of eight as in the Victor set.

The *Rondo* on the last side owns an impish quality — it is Mozart in a wholly carefree and buoyant mood. The pianist plays it delightfully.

From the reproductive side the concerto has been worthily handled; the essential intimacy conveyed by the soloist's style being fully maintained. There may be some shattering of the piano tone in a first playing but a steel needle should clear this up. The surfaces are good.

—P. H. R.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

BEETHOVEN: *String Trio in G major, Op. 9, No. 1*; played by Mara Sebriansky, violin, Edward Neikrug, viola, and George Neikrug, cello. Musicraft Album No. 28, three discs, price \$5.

The three string trios, Op. 9, were published in 1798. Beethoven seems to have considered them the best things he had written up to that time. The *G major* reveals the same mastery of late 18th-century style as do the Opus 18 quartets; and in scope and details of construction the trio could well have served as a study for the quartets. The first movement—an Allegro con brio, preceded, as with Haydn, by a slow introduction—is planned on a large scale, for an early work; there are wide leaps in the individual parts, a complete independence of the voices, and an elaborate coda. This is followed by a fine Adagio, governed largely by triplets, a rather undistinguished Scherzo, and a final Presto noteworthy for its bold modulations. The three instruments are so skillfully handled throughout that one never feels any undesirable thinness of texture or the need of additional support.

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*Edited by*  
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Contents of January, 1939

Volume XXV, No. 1

A WORD OF COMMENT	Waldo Selden Pratt (Hartford, Conn.)
OSCAR G. SONNECK	Carl Engel (New York)
ADOLPHE NOUBRIT	Francis Rogers (New York)
THE HARMONIC STRUCTURE OF A MUSICAL TONE	Carl E. Seashore (Iowa City, Iowa)
THE MUSICAL LIBRARIES OF PARIS: THE CONSERVATOIRE — THE OPERA	J.-G. Prod'homme (Paris)
THE EARLIEST EDITIONS OF HANDEL'S "WATER MUSIC"	William C. Smith (London)
VINCENT D'INDY'S DISCOVERY OF MUSICAL GERMANY IN 1873	Leon Vallet (Lyon, France)
THE UNIQUE COPY OF THE OLDEST OPERA: THE ORFEO DOLENTE OF DOMENICO BELLI	Antonio Tirelli (Brescia)
THE SO-CALLED NETHERLANDS SCHOOLS	Paul H. Lang (New York)
PARSIFAL IN ROMANIC LANDS	Adolfo Salazar (Washington, D. C.)
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